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ABSTRACT

This British guide contains reviews of software available for Basic Skills, including English for Speakers of Other Languages, in both education and training for employment. In addition, it offers guidance on how to use software effectively to develop basic skills. Section 1 provides information about the following aspects of the guide: computers and compatibility, windows, software included, prices, suppliers, and types of software--content free, dedicated, drill and practice, computer-based learning and training, and multimedia. Section 2 categorizes the software for literacy into these groups: literacy, numeracy, work skills, word processors, databases, spreadsheets, integrated packages, and desktop publishing. Before the appropriate category, information is provided on using a word processor, using a database, using a spreadsheet, integrated packages, and desktop publishing. Each review is accompanied by this information in a sidebar format: make of computer, price, publisher, and availability. Over 150 software packages are reviewed. Three indexes are provided: subject, computer, and publisher. Addresses of British publishers and distributors are appended. (YLB)

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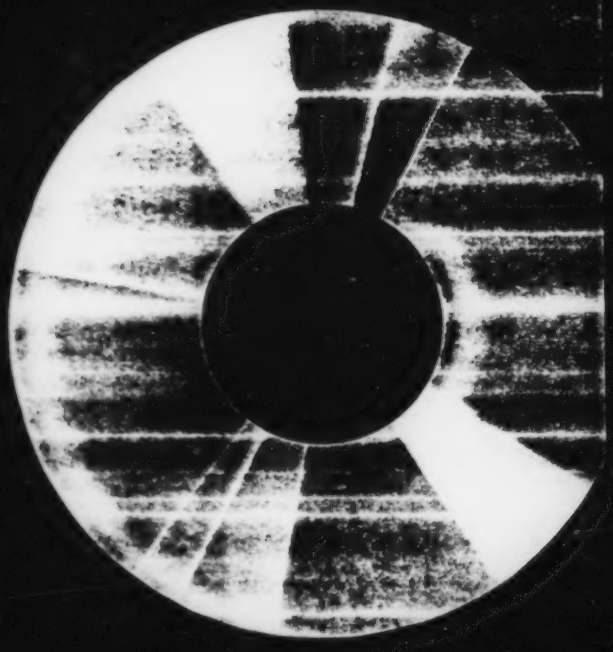
ED 382 804

ALBSU The Basic Skills Unit

Basic Skills Software Guide

For the Apple Macintosh
Acorn Archimedes
RM Nimbus
IBM PC and Compatibles



Second Edition

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Basic Skills Software Guide

For the Apple Macintosh
Acorn Archimedes
RM Nimbus
IBM PC and Compatibles

Second Edition

ALBSU Registered Charity No. 327940 The Basic Skills Unit

This guide is published by the Basic Skills Unit (ALBSU). It has been produced by an ALBSU Special Development Project providing support in IT and Basic Skills.

The guide provides information about software available for Basic Skills, including English for Speakers of Other Languages, in both education and training for employment. In addition, it offers guidance on how to use software effectively to develop basic skills.

Software for Apple Macintosh, Acorn Archimedes, IBM PC and compatibles and ROM Nimbus computers is included in the guide. Software for the BBC Computer is not included. Although the BBC computer has served education well in the past, it is increasingly being replaced with more up-to-date equipment. A recent NCET survey found that 83% of users in further education worked with more than one type of machine. Software development is taking place for machines other than the BBC. In ALBSU's view, basic skills students should have access to the latest technology. This is reflected in the contents of the guide.

Freda Hollin
Nancy Rowbottom

Updated by Freda Hollin and Maggie Jakeman

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About this guide

COMPUTERS AND COMPATIBILITY

This guide contains reviews of software for the following makes of computer: Apple Macintosh, Acorn Archimedes, IBM PC and compatibles, RM Nimbus.

There are a number of different models of computer within each range. The inclusion of a program for a particular make of computer is not a guarantee that it will run on every model. You are advised to check with software publishers before purchase. Some programs, particularly professional packages, need to be installed on a hard disk, and have minimum memory requirements in order to run.

In the software reviews Nimbus refers to Nimbus PC-186 computers, or Nimbus PC-286/386/486 computers running in RM mode. Nimbus PC-286/386/486 computers are IBM compatible and will therefore run IBM software as well.

PC EMULATION

Some programs which are published for IBM PC and compatibles will also run on Archimedes and Nimbus PC-186 computers under a PC emulator, but this is not the case for all IBM software. Where a program is known to run under a PC emulator, this is made clear under the computer specification; for other programs you are advised to check with the software publisher. It should be pointed out that the performance of a program under a PC emulator may not be as good as on an IBM; for example, programs tend to run more slowly.

A PC emulator is supplied by Research Machines with Nimbus PC-186 computers; for the Archimedes a PC emulator can be obtained from Acorn dealers.

WINDOWS

Some programs are described as running under Windows; this refers to Microsoft Windows, a separate program which you need to have installed on a hard disk or network server.

SOFTWARE INCLUDED

Educational software

The following criteria have been used to decide what to include in this guide:

- marketed for adult basic skills
- marketed for schools but suitable for use with adults
- marketed for FE but appropriate for basic skills in education and training
- non-phase specific software appropriate for use with adults

Professional (industry standard) software

Professional software is discussed in the introduction to each section on applications software. In the Wordprocessing, Database and Spreadsheet sections, the leading professional programs are listed but not reviewed.

PRICES

Although prices of software have been checked during the preparation of the guide, they should be taken as a guide only. Prices quoted are single user, educational prices (where applicable), exclusive of VAT.

Several prices may apply to a single program: standalone (single copy, multiple user); network; site licence. Details can be obtained from the publisher. Some software is available under licence from local education authorities; check with your LEA. Educational discounts are not available for all professional packages, but special offers are often available from dealers and it is worth shopping around.

SUPPLIERS

Unless otherwise indicated, software is available from the publisher. Where programs are available from a number of other sources, the main distributor has been listed, or dealer is indicated. Some publishers will provide inspection or demonstration copies of software. If this is not the case, contact a local dealer or a teacher's centre to see if you can look at a program before you buy.

IBM DISKS

Some IBM software is only available on one size of disk; other software is available on both 5.25" and 3.5" disks. Check with the supplier before purchase and make sure you specify on your order which size you need.

Types of software

CONTENT-FREE SOFTWARE

Content-free software turns the computer into a useful tool and can be used to support learning in all areas of the curriculum. Most educational content-free software is designed to encourage an investigative approach to learning.

The major content-free applications are: wordprocessor, database, spreadsheet, integrated packages and desktop publishing, and these are listed under separate headings. There is a description of each type of program and guidance on its use in the development of basic skills.

Content-free software designed primarily for use in education is included under the appropriate subject heading: literacy, numeracy, or work skills.

There are a number of advantages in using content-free software to develop basic skills:

- the flexibility of the program allows the user to work on a topic and at a level of their own choosing
- the program can be used by students of different levels of ability
- the user is in control of the program
- the program is never exhausted
- the student can acquire real computer skills whilst developing other skills.

The disadvantage for the teacher of using content-free applications is the need to provide support materials, including instructions on how to operate the program, and exercises which combine the process of learning how to use the program with the development of other skills. However, once materials have been created they can be used again and again, and adapted easily to meet individual needs. Content-free applications frequently provide tools for learning which are much more powerful than software designed to deal with a specific area of concepts, knowledge or skills.

DEDICATED SOFTWARE

Dedicated software is designed for use in a particular subject area. In this guide it is listed under the subject headings of literacy, numeracy and work skills.

Dedicated software varies enormously in quality and style. Good software will take advantage of the computer to provide a learning situation which cannot be achieved with pen and paper or other traditional methods. It will involve the student in decision-making, and offer him or her some control in the learning process. Much of the software which develops basic skills has been designed for children; when choosing software make sure that the content and presentation of the program is appropriate for adult students.

Two particular types of dedicated software are described in more detail below, but all programs in the guide are reviewed individually and not all programs can be categorised as a particular type.

DRILL AND PRACTICE

Drill and practice software is designed to provide practice in a particular skill, such as spelling or the four rules of arithmetic. Some programs will have authoring facilities which enable the teacher or user to enter his/her own vocabulary, text or parameters.

The advantage of this type of software is that it is generally easy to use, and it provides instant feedback to the student.

However, drill and practice software can be boring and repetitious. Skills are treated discretely and exercises are not placed in any context. Drill and practice programs do not exploit the potential of the computer to provide creative learning. Such programs rarely teach the how and why of learning, their design being limited to the reinforcement of knowledge, concepts and skills already learned.

COMPUTER-BASED LEARNING (CBL)/ COMPUTER-BASED TRAINING (CBT)

Programs which are described as computer-based learning (educational) or computer-based training (vocational) are intended to instruct the user in a particular subject, to provide practice on what has been learned, and to assess performance and progress through tests.

CBL and CBT programs are attractive as a means of independent learning as they provide a (usually substantial) course of instruction which the student can follow at his/her own pace, with plenty of practice exercises which are marked immediately.

However, CBL programs are often similar to a text-book on screen, sometimes without the advantage of being able to turn back the page; if students have been unable to learn independently from a text-book they are unlikely to succeed just because the material is presented on a computer screen. CBL programs should not be regarded, therefore, as a substitute for a teacher. In some programs the presentation of the material demands a higher level of skill than what is being taught, making the programs particularly unsuitable for students seeking to improve their basic skills.

Computer-based learning and training programs are time-consuming to develop and expensive to buy. It is worth asking for detailed information and a free demonstration copy before deciding whether to purchase.

MULTIMEDIA SOFTWARE

Multimedia software can combine text, sound, graphics, animation and video, and is a rapidly developing medium. However, as yet there are virtually no multimedia products dedicated to adult basic skills, and whilst many general resources, such as encyclopaedias, dictionaries and atlases, can be useful, there are too many to include in this guide. Some multimedia applications have been included in the literacy section.

Software for literacy

Autoskill Reading

Apple Mac
IBM
Price £599

The Autoskill Reading System was designed in Canada and adapted for use in the UK. The program uses a structured approach to testing and training three reading skills: visual matching, auditory visual matching and oral reading. The aim is to produce an accurate, consistent, automatic response to text on screen, which in turn leads to an overall improvement in reading. The student initially undertakes tests to identify the reading difficulty; the program then analyses the results and recommends an appropriate training program. There are different training programs for the three subskills. All, however, start with single letter sounds and progress through syllables, words, phrases and paragraphs. The paragraphs can be edited so that the material is relevant to the students.

In the visual matching program the text (letter, word, syllable, phrase) appears at the top of the screen. The task is to match it to one of three choices which appear below by pressing the appropriate key on the keyboard. In auditory visual matching the user hears the text and matches it with one of the three choices on screen. The oral reading program requires one-to-one support from a competent reader. The student reads the text aloud and the assistant provides feedback and enters the results using the keyboard. A complete analysis of progress is provided and this is presented in the form of graphs and tables and provides a record of all the tasks done so far. The main progress screen shows which stages have been assigned, which mastered and which are in progress. This is a highly structured program and it is essential that the student is guided by a trained user. The IBM PC version requires a soundcard.

Published by Autoskill. Available from The Literacy Development Company

Baselines

IBM
Price £15

Baselines is a program for guided self-assessment in basic skills, designed to help adults appraise their reading, writing and number skills. It does not claim to be an exact assessment tool, nor is it a test. Throughout the program, responses are input through multiple-choice and at any stage users can choose to stop or continue. *Using reading* asks how often skills are used, followed by a brief, general comment. In *A closer look at reading* students are asked to look at printed support material and decide how well they would be able to read it. This task is followed by a breakdown of the difficulties expressed by the student. *Your confidence with reading* operates in a similar way, concentrating on attitude and confidence rather than skills. Printouts of work are available and can be used in planning programmes of work and goal-setting. On-screen information is clearly presented, with only one task appearing at a time. The printed materials are excellent and can be used without the computer program. Some students will not have the reading skills necessary to use the program therefore prior assessment may be required. The sections on writing and number operate in the same way as the section on reading.

Published by ALBSU

The Cloze Program

The program allows text up to five pages long to be entered and made into a gap-fill or cloze exercise. The user sees the text with the missing words at the bottom of the screen. A missing word is entered by typing in the gap; this can be done in any order. It is easy to use and encourages the use of prediction and using context clues in reading.

Archimedes Nimbus
Price £38.50

Published by AVP Computing

Codebreaker

The program encodes sentences using different codes: one example is the alphabet in reverse: a = z, b = y, and so on through the alphabet. The student's task is to break the code, using guesswork, and spelling and contextual clues as the sentence is decoded.

IBM
Price £30 protected
£60 unprotected

Published by Cambridge ELT Software

The Complete Speller

The program aims to encourage children to learn, practise and reinforce spelling and uses a systematic spelling/sounds approach. It is appropriate for adults. Words in isolation are grouped according to frequency, interest and difficulty in four different kinds of word bank. These are based on statistics from work with children and further word banks can be added. The first task is to read a word and, using the cursor keys, reassemble it from its parts, which could be syllables, words within words or difficult parts. Next, the whole word appears in a box to identify its shape, then the user types the word. The program does not accept incorrect letters and continues after three incorrect attempts. The last activity is a speed test for upper/lower case discrimination. Program instructions, such as 'Press the space-bar to continue', flash on and off at the bottom of the screen, which can distract the reader from other on-screen information. Progress record sheets are included for the word banks.

Archimedes
Nimbus
Price £17

Published by Northern Micromedia

The Complete Wordsearch

This enables students or teachers to use their own words to create wordsearch puzzles, which can be printed out or solved using the computer.

Archimedes Nimbus
Price £38.50

Available from AVP Computing

Context (Spelling It Out)

Context is a language program written as part of the Spelling it Out initiative. Students are given the task of reconstructing a text which has some, or most, of the letters stripped out. The program offers help facilities, such as 'buying' a word, or a letter, either in a particular place or throughout the text. The program encourages the use of all language clues – alphabet, spelling, wordorder, rhyme, meaning and context, to re-build the text. Context is supplied with sixty-four texts written specifically for adults. The texts are arranged in eight themes: Descriptions and Lives, Word Knowledge, Storytelling, What am I, Thoughts in Print, Poetry, Thinking about Spelling and Writing Letters. Texts vary in difficulty. A partially-completed text can be saved for a future session, and texts can be printed out. Context is a useful program for stimulating discussion amongst a small group of students.

IBM
Nimbus
Price £32.50

Published by BBCSoft. Available from AVP Computing

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DAVIDSON'S ENGLISH EXPRESS

Price on application

This is a multimedia learning system designed for ESOL/EFL students and enables them to practise all four language skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing. The package consists of three components, a videodisk tutor presentation tool, a CD-ROM for self-paced practice and a set of off-line learning materials to support students at beginner and intermediate level. Each of these components can be bought individually. Features of the program include a multimedia photo dictionary, interactive games, speech input and playback facilities and digitised 'natural' speech. There is extensive documentation to accompany the package. This is an American product and it has not been versioned for the English market. This information is from the distributor; the product has not been reviewed.

Published by Davidson. European Distributor ABLAC

DEADLINE

IBM
Price £30 protected
£60 unprotected

This program aims to provide a framework for the group activity of producing a guidebook. Information on the topic is included and high level reading skills are needed. It would seem more useful to produce a guidebook on a real place, chosen by students.

Published by Cambridge ELT Software

DESKTOP ENGLISH

IBM
Price £500

Students learning English as a second language can use this interactive program to work through a variety of activities covering the four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. The language is presented through 12 topic areas ranging from greetings and goodbyes to routines and business, at levels from beginners to advanced. An on-screen 'course map' listing all the topic areas and activities can be customised for each student by highlighting those tasks to be done. Students are then given their own password and records of their progress can be monitored both by themselves and the teacher. Sound is used for dialogues and text readings, thus help for a cloze passage can be provided with on-screen written hints or by listening to the passage being spoken. A facility to generate multi-level text disclosures and a jumbled text from one keyed-in text is a time-saver for tutors. A dictionary and spellcheck are available. Screen presentation is good and includes both clear text and graphics. The program is operated with a mouse and pull down menus.

Published by Sanderson CBT

DEVELOPING TRAY

Nimbus
Price £28
IBM
Wintray Price £55

Developing Tray is a text-disclosure program. The task is to reconstruct a text which has some, or most, of the letters stripped out. The program offers help facilities, such as 'buying' a word, or a letter, either in a particular place or throughout the text. A complete text can be viewed at any stage. Texts can be over more than one screen and incorporate 'headstarts', which always appear in full such as in the title, and 'starred' words which are only revealed when the whole word is entered. On loading the program users are given choices of how the text will appear. These choices allow the user to grade the task; they can also be bypassed by setting the conditions required and giving a username. Texts can be entered using the Editor. A Windows version of the program incorporates new features, including being able to combine a picture with the text, and the use of a sign other than 'equals' to indicate a missing letter, which means that the program could also be used in mathematics and numeracy.

Published by ILECC

EUROSTACK

Apple Mac
Price £45

This is a Hypercard Stack of information on Europe. The stack includes pages for travel, food and drink, governments, languages, sport, and many more. However, apart from excellent on-screen maps and some sample pages (European languages, tips about driving in France) the pages are blank and it is up to the user to research and complete the details. This can be done through studying individual countries or through different subject areas. It is easy to find your way around the stack and to add information which can be as simple or complex as you like. There is a 'find' facility so that the database can be used for searches, and a reference section which can be expanded with definitions of words used in the stack.

Published by The Flexible Learning Company

EXPRESSION

Apple Mac
Price £49.99

This is a tool which enables the user to plan and organise ideas for writing by creating an on-screen spidergram or flow chart. Main headings are organised and more detailed information attached; the plan is then represented as a text outline. The spidergram or flow chart is created by first selecting an object tool – square, circle, triangle, etc. – and drawing an object; the object is given a description, or heading, which is displayed inside the shape; more detailed notes can then be attached to the object. Notes are written on a separate screen, and an icon is displayed inside the object to indicate that notes are attached. Objects can be linked together and the link lines can be labelled. A plan can be constructed incorporating different levels, like a branching tree. When a structure has been established the spidergram or chart can be viewed in a text format, with object descriptions listed as headings and the notes for each one underneath. The sequence of text can be altered, and text can then be transferred into a wordprocessor. Graphics can also be attached to an object, enabling text to be illustrated. With this facility the program can also be used to develop projects as well as plan writing. Presentation can be enhanced through DTP-type features enabling objects to be pattern or colour filled. The program will be particularly attractive to those with some IT skills (mouse skills are essential) but it does offer flexibility of planning to writers at all levels.

Published by SCET

FORMS

Archimedes
Price £25
IBM
Nimbus
Price £32.50

A form remains a form whether on paper or on screen, but this program does provide opportunities to fill in a comprehensive range of useful forms in another medium. There is a choice of 13 forms which can be filled in on screen and printed out, or printed out and filled in on paper. The list includes personal information, three levels of a job application form and a simplified application for a driving licence. The 'equal opps' form provides practice in ticking boxes. Some forms have been designed for school students but as forms can be amended and new ones created content can be customised for each user. Screen layout is clear and the program is easy to use with on-screen help always available.

Published by Careersoft

FROM PICTURES TO WORDS

Archimedes
Nimbus
Price £35

This is a simple text editor which can be used with pictures – simple line drawings – from the library of over three hundred pictures. It was devised for use in primary education, but its very basic approach to language and literacy work make it suitable for use with beginner readers and writers, particularly speakers of other languages. It has nine activities which include initial letter matching, word matching, spelling from a picture prompt and using picture prompts for gap-fill exercises. A very basic task would be to type the first letter of a word on the screen, which is accompanied by a picture, so that meaning is clear. New pictures can be created using the editor and there are further theme libraries available on topics such as *Outdoor World* and *Cooking/Shopping*.

Published by Widgit Software

Fun with Texts II

This is an authoring package which allows any short text to be stored and then exploited using seven different exercises and games. These include a complete cloze ie. no letters at all, cloze, jumbled text, anagrams, encoding and prediction. The program could be useful to encourage students to explore texts, at the same time reinforcing selected vocabulary and structures. It is also available in a range of European languages.

Archimedes
Price £45
IBM Nimbus
Price £95 for 10 copies
Single user copies supplied only by negotiation.

Published by Camsoft

Gapmaster

This provides the framework for teachers to create simple gap-fill exercises in sentences. It operates in two modes: exploratory mode gives hints for correct answers, test mode does not. If a wrong answer is entered, a brief 'no' appears the bottom of the screen. There can be several alternative correct answers and some on-screen help is available.

Apple Mac IBM
Price £75 (up to 5 users)

Published by Wida

Genesis Project

Genesis is a type of program known as hypermedia (like Hypercard on the Apple Mac). Genesis is used to create an application which consists of linked pages of information. A page can contain a mixture of text, graphics, animation and sound attached to frames. A frame might also contain an icon to load a file created with another program, for example, a picture created with a paint program, or a piece of music created with a music program. Frames on a page can be defined as buttons which are linked to other pages. This enables a flexible source to be created where the user can easily move around pages of information in a non-linear way by using a mouse to point and click at different parts of the screen. Genesis is ideal for project work where either an individual or a group of students can compile information on a topic in a more creative and flexible way than is possible with a conventional database program. Alternatively, teachers can create Genesis applications appropriate to the ability 'levels of their students who will not require much experience with computers in order to access information. Genesis Project is an 'entry level' multimedia authoring program. A more powerful and sophisticated version, Genesis Professional, is also available.

Archimedes
Genesis Project £50
Genesis Professional £120
IBM
Genesis for Windows £70

Published by Oak Solutions

GOAL

GOAL – Giving Options through Adult Learning – offers a large collection of texts and vocabulary on four themes: work (including job-search), health and safety, life skills and general reading. The reading part appears identical to 'Read 'n' Roll (see page 18), including the bowling game. The vocabulary part, the same as Word Attack Plus (see page 22). T' › reason for the high price of GOAL compared with other similar packages is presumably the inclusion of substantial body of texts, and the fact that there is additional material for teachers to help with lesson planning. The texts are largely satisfactory, with occasional residual evidence of the transatlantic origin of the material. This is most apparent in the general reading section. Texts and vocabulary can be edited, so oddities like *skillful* (for skilful) and *reference* (for referee) can be corrected easily. It is also possible to add new texts, though this is not for the fainthearted. You can turn off minor irritations like the sound and the 'reward' graphics. The printed teaching material also contains Americanisms, including spelling and money references and these cannot easily be edited out. GOAL could be useful for students who simply want to read relevant texts at a fairly easy level, and check their understanding of the reading passages and vocabulary.

IBM
Price £225

Published by Davidson. European distributor ABLAC

Grammar Games

IBM
Price £45

This EFL pack contains four programs based on activities from Mario Rinvolucri's book of the same name. The activities are designed as games for practising language and can be played by 1-4 players. All the programs have authoring facilities. *Mystery Stories* provides a set of clues to reconstruct a story. There are four key-word clues, and the player chooses questions to ask from a series provided. In response to a correct answer the program reveals the relevant part of the text. This process continues until the story is complete. It is a challenging activity; the stories need to be mysterious enough to provide the motivation to continue. The *Grid Game* is a word-matching exercise using a fruit machine format. There are three levels; beginner has no time limit but the competent and expert levels have a time limit which, on some computers, makes the game impossible. Maximum length of word is eight letters and examples given are prefixes and suffixes where these are matched with the root of the word. It is quite absorbing and probably would improve vocabulary, but the format seems cumbersome for a simple idea. In *Auction*, students bid against each other to 'buy' grammatically correct sentences. The bidding seemed to have little value and detracts from the language activity. *Snakes and Ladders* is also a means of identifying correct sentences. It is based on the familiar board game, but the screen is less than clear and counters move up and down with alarming rapidity.

Published by Cambridge ELT Software

Grammar Gremlins

IBM
Price £39.95

This program is designed for ages 9-12 and claims to make grammar fun. In fact, most of the program comprises multiple-choice grammar exercises in the *Build Your Skill* section. There follows a game *Grammar Gremlins*, which is a speed test on different grammar points. The game is the most childish part of the program and not very useful. There is a pre-test which offers multiple-choice questions on a range of grammar topics. The user is then directed to certain sections depending on their performance in the pre-test. Sections are: capitals, plurals, contractions, punctuation, parts of speech and sentences. Rules on each point are included and can be referred to at any time. There is an editing facility so you can add to the rules to make them clearer or include your own exercises. There is some evidence of its American origins. It may be useful for further grammar practice and an alternative to paper-based grammar exercises.

Published by Davidson. European distributor ABLAC

Health Matters

IBM
Nimbus
Archimedes
Price £12

The Health Matters pack provides assignments to develop written and oral communication skills, which are linked to the City & Guilds Wordpower Certificate. There are four assignments in separate student booklets, each of which incorporates the use of the computer program, Healthdata, a database of information on health topics (which is not included in the pack, but can be bought separately; see *Healthdata*). The assignments are: *Working with children*, *Working for a magazine*, *Understanding alcohol abuse* and *Food Additives*. Skills practised include using a reference system, following written instructions, giving information, using tables and charts, telephoning for information, giving reassurance and advice, giving a short talk and writing a formal letter. The assignments also provide models for writing materials to exploit existing software. The pack contains laminated instruction cards for using *Healthdata* on Archimedes, IBM and Nimbus computers.

Published by ILECC for ALBSU. Available from LETSS

HEALTH DATA

See page 50

THE HULTON DEUTSCH COLLECTION: PEOPLE AND DECADES

IBM (People)
Price £149.99
Apple Mac (Decades)
Price £34.99 each

The Hulton Deutsch picture library houses thousands upon thousands of the world's most famous photographs. *People* and *Decades* are two of the CD collections now being made available by Hulton Deutsch, primarily intended as catalogues of source materials for professional purposes, but with unlimited free use of the low-resolution images from the disc 'for presentation and non-commercial usage'. These collections provide a wealth of material to stimulate creative writing, to illustrate project work and to develop research skills.

The *People* CD contains around 10,000 black-and-white and colour photographs of 4,000 people. Finding the picture you want, or just browsing, is a simple matter: you enter your search word(s) or choose from a huge list of key subjects, and within a few seconds 'thumbnail' images matching the search criteria appear on the screen. Each image can be viewed individually in a larger format, with its caption. It is possible to save a personal selection of thumbnail images, with or without captions or your own brief notes, for future use. The larger images can be saved to disc and used in an appropriate wordprocessor, drawing or DTP program.

The *Decades* CDs (20s, 30s, 50, 60s), each containing 2,500 pictures from that decade, works in a similar way, but there are more interesting ways of searching: for example, you can find pictures relating to mood, action, location etc, so using the 60s CD, the search term 'patience' produced pictures of queues, while combining 'child' with 'sleeping' produced a photograph of a homeless child in Bombay and another of a child hop-picker asleep in a bin of hops.

If you want to use a picture for professional purposes, Hulton Deutsch sends you a top-quality print in return for your licence fee. However, for educational (non-profit-making) use, the versions on the disc are more than adequate, and, provided you have bought the CD, they are copyright free. The *People* CD is in Windows format. The *Decades* collection is for the Apple Mac, but you would be well advised to check the minimum computer specification you will need to run it.

Published by Hulton Deutsch

HYPERSTUDIO

Apple Mac
Price £99.95

HyperStudio is a content-free application. The program can be used to create files, called stacks, which consist of cards of information. The information can be text, graphics, sound animation or video sequences. This type of hypermedia software, where there can be different routes between cards, can be complicated to use. However, HyperStudio has been developed specifically for educational use and is significantly easier to get started with than similar software due to the on-screen support provided throughout the authoring process. The software is appropriate for teachers to create learning and support materials tailored to the needs of students. It may also be used to great effect by students to create project stacks of their own. Although it can take some time to learn how to use all the features available, useful activities can be undertaken quite quickly with just a few of the facilities. HyperStudio is one of the friendliest introductions to multimedia and comes with examples and a thorough tutorial to get you started. The American west-coast origin is apparent in the informal style and examples, but it is not too grating and has little impact when the program is used to create new material.

Published by Roger Wagner Publishing Inc. Available from TAG

IDELTA

Nimbus
Price £28

Idelta is designed to develop skills in classification, discrimination and identification. The computer has a list of objects and a list of questions to distinguish between the objects. Each question has a yes/no answer. The user thinks of an object and the computer asks questions until it can make a guess. If the object is not in the computer's list, it can be added, and the user will be asked to provide a question to distinguish the object from others in the list. The program can be used to create new lists on different topics.

Published by ILECC. Available from LETSS

IN THE GARDEN

See page 32

IT AND BASIC SKILLS – A TRAINING PACK FOR TUTORS

See page 41

IT FOR ADULTS WITH DYSLEXIA

See page 42

JOURNEY INTO SAFETY

IBM
Price £34.99

This program is designed to help increase every road user's awareness of road safety and the Highway Code. There is a choice of activities: in Drive and Learn the user takes on the role of a car driver driving around a fictitious town. Each screen presents a picture which includes traffic signs, road markings and hazards. Information about each sign or hazard can be obtained by pointing and clicking on the item. There is an accompanying road map to help navigation; the map can also be viewed on screen. The section on the Highway Code presents questions on the highway code in a number of topic areas including pedestrians, cyclists, motorways, and traffic signs. Answers may be multiple choice, true or false, or require the user to type a word at the keyboard. Projects offer the user the opportunity to use their knowledge; each project has a specific objective and conveys a message in road safety. The Highway Challenge is a test on the Highway Code with a total of 50 questions, but if you get one wrong you are returned to the menu to start again. There is also a section presenting written information on the Green Cross Code.

The program is very simple to use, and the screen displays are very clear. The road signs on the information and question screens are excellent, and the text is presented in a good-sized, clear font which makes for easy reading. Throughout the program there is feedback on incorrect answers to questions. The program will be of use to all road users, but particularly to those preparing for a driving test. The map reading practice and readability also make it a useful resource for basic skills work.

Published by Kosmos Software Ltd

LETTERHUNT

IBM
Price £30 protected
£45 unprotected

Letterhunt gives practice in letter recognition and discrimination and alphabet order. It is in the form of a game where random letters scroll down the screen. The arrow keys are used to move the cursor around the screen and the task is to 'hit' the moving letters with the cursor. This is done in a chosen order, such as upper case followed by the corresponding lower case letter starting at the beginning of the alphabet. People who enjoy games and need basic letter recognition work may find it useful.

Published by Cambridge ELT Software

London Adventure

IBM
Price £30 protected
£45 unprotected

Published by Cambridge ELT Software

London Adventure is a problem-solving exercise where the user travels around London to complete given purchases before catching a plane from London. It shows a definite EFL bias but may be interesting for people living in or visiting London. It would need preparatory work to make it effective. There is a considerable amount of reading and the lack of graphics makes it visually unexciting.

Matchmaster

Apple Mac
IBM
Price £75 (up to 5 users)

Published by Wida

In Matchmaster the screen is divided vertically into two; words and phrases are scrolled up or down until matching meanings are found. An authoring program is included and areas of language to practise could include opposites, synonyms, parts of sentences or words and meanings. It includes the games *Memory* and *Snap* for vocabulary reinforcement.

The New Reading Disc

IBM
Price £395 + VAT

The New Reading Disc is a new product which builds on the approach of the original Reading Disc, incorporating recommendations made in the pilot stage of that project. It is now supplied on a standard CD to run on a Windows multimedia computer. The Reading Disc provides four generative activities. In *Write an article* users select from adult topics, and choose sentences, photographs and a title to compile an article. Text can be also be listened to. The finished article can be printed out to provide reading material. In this new version students can also add their own sentences. *Have a debate with the computer* allows students to select from a number of controversial topics, hear a point of view expressed, and compile a response. Again sentences can be added. In *Write a letter* the user chooses and edits letter formats. In *Use a map* exercises require users to find their way around a selection of maps. In addition to the activities, there are exercises based on words and sentences in the system. Exercises include dictation, sentence builder, alphabetical order, word invaders, puzzle and keywords. Assessment is provided through six exercises: *Comprehension, Using dictionaries, Reading Signs, Find the way, Reading timetables and Fill in a form*, based on ALBSU Basic Skills Standards. There is a tracking system which stores results on floppy disk.

The New Reading Disc is designed to enable adaptation to different settings, languages and cultures, using an authoring capability which allows users to insert their own photos, audio, video and text. New material can be incorporated into many of the exercises.

Published by ALBSU/Cambridge Training & Development (CTAD)

This description is based on information provided by the publisher, and a review of the original Reading Disc.

Newsroom

IBM
Nimbus
Price £24

Published ITEM

Newsroom provides material for a newsroom simulation using the program Simtex (see page 16). It is a group activity where students prepare news stories for newspapers (handwritten, or using a wordprocessor) based on the information provided in telex messages. The Simtex files are taken from original telexes as received in the BBC newsroom over a period of 24 hours. Newsroom can generate an exciting activity with students of all abilities. The Simtex program is not supplied with Newsroom.

NEWTOWN

Nimbus
Price £25
Additional copies of support materials: £5.00 per set

Newtown is a problem-solving activity designed for adults. There are four Newtown stories: in the first, the user arrives at a new town and has to solve the practical problems of finding a temporary job and place to live. The second story allows the newcomer to make friends and travel around the town. The last two parts involve looking for a job and getting a flat.

Solutions to problems posed by the computer are contained in a range of support materials which include a newspaper, a guide to the town, maps, bus and train timetables, cafe menus. Newtown is a group activity which will stimulate discussion and encourage the use of literacy, numeracy and communication skills. It can be used to practise particular skills, such as map-reading, or as a stimulus for further activities.

Published by ILECC for ALBSU.
Available from LETSS

PERFECT COPY

Apple Mac
IBM
Price £149.95

Perfect Copy is essentially a proof-reading program which enables students to work independently on their grammar, punctuation and word usage by correcting errors in texts at three different levels and in 11 different language skills areas. The 500 texts covering stories, letters and articles can be used as they come or be modified by the tutor. The tutor can also add additional texts. Skills areas covered are: apostrophes, abbreviations, irregular verbs, numbers, easily confused words, subject-verb agreement, commas, capital letters, beginning and ending punctuation, other punctuation and any combination of these. Screen presentation is clear and texts at the lowest level are double line spaced. On screen help, rules and clues are all easily accessible. Students choose the skills area they wish to work from and then a text from one of three levels (easy, more difficult and most difficult) and interests (youth, teenage and adult). Errors are all single words or punctuation, and can be corrected in any order. The student can type in the correction or choose the correct word (where appropriate) from a list at the side of the screen: an incorrect answer is not accepted. Clues are actually indications of where the error is, and are offered at five different levels. The rules are concise and cover all errors in the text; however, they should be seen as a summarised reminder rather than a tutorial. The documentation which comes with the package includes a booklet of the rules. Teachers are able to monitor student progress via the record keeping facility. This notes each student's name, the article read, the skill area, time taken, whether all corrections were made and the percentage and type of clues used. These records can be printed out.

Published by Logicus Incorporated.
Available from The Literacy Development Co. Ltd

PINPOINT

Apple Mac
IBM
Price £75 (up to 5 users)

Both parts of this program, *Pinpoint* and *Matchpoint*, require the student to match a newspaper or magazine article with its title. Although the articles are all genuine, this exercise may be more effective using original articles on paper, rather than on the computer.

Published by Wida

PUNCTUATE!

Archimedes,
IBM,
Nimbus
Price £19.95

Stated to be for age 7 – adult, this program provides practice in placing punctuation marks. A text is shown with some or all the punctuation removed. All the missing punctuation marks appear at random in a box at the bottom of the screen. They can be inserted into the text in any order by using the cursor keys. More texts can be added.

Published by Topologika

Quizword

Archimedes
Price £34
Nimbus

Quizword is a puzzle program to create and solve crosswords and acrostics. It is clear and easy to use. Puzzles can be devised from 4 x 4 to 15 x 15. Up to three clues can be included for each answer, which means that puzzles can be as simple or challenging as required.

Published by ILECC.
Available from LETSS

Read 'n' Roll

IBM
Price £39.95

Designed for ages 9-12, this program aims to improve reading comprehension in five areas. It contains 320 short texts, few of which would be appropriate for adults, but it has editing facilities to input your own texts. Four of the five activities follow the same format with the text in clear typeface. Reading is timed and when the student is ready, pressing the space bar replaces the text with a multiple-choice question. The types of questions are: *Main Idea* which relates to gist, *Facts*, *Sequence*, for example 'What happened after...', and *Inferences*, for example 'The last sentence suggests...' If an incorrect answer is chosen, help is given by highlighting the relevant part of the text. After two incorrect answers the right answer is supplied. Graphics such as an aeroplane flying across the screen are occasionally used to reward correct answers. The final activity is a game of ten pin bowling. Words from any text can be chosen and these appear in a multiple-choice vocabulary exercise. A correct answer gives the opportunity to bowl the ball. This computerised version of the traditional paper-based reading comprehension exercise may provide motivation to work on texts. Its design and layout are mostly appropriate for adults and students may well enjoy the game as a reward for completing rather pedestrian exercises.

Published by Davidson.
European distributor
ABLAC

Reading for Study Skills

Archimedes
Price £20

Produced for older school students and adults, this package provides both computer and paper-based tasks aimed at reinforcing the four skills needed for effective reading – prediction, sequencing, skimming and scanning at three levels – basic, intermediate and advanced. The computer program was originally produced for the BBC and its conversion to the Archimedes has not taken out operating instructions no longer relevant. It comes with a set of texts and there is an easy authoring facility for teachers to add others. As this is a program for improving reading skills, it is a pity that the texts are not easier to read on the screen and that the general screen layout is not clearer. Students having trouble with sequencing would find these tasks difficult to do. A word list, instructions or text are presented on screen with each line numbered. The student has to key-in the correct number in a highlighted section at the bottom of the screen; at no stage is the correctly sequenced text shown.

Published by The
Resource Centre

Ripe for Development

Nimbus
Price £28

Ripe for Development is a collection of over fifty poems for use with Developing Tray, a program to develop reading strategies through prediction. The poems are by established authors and almost all are suitable for use with adults. The poetry covers a wide range of subjects and is written in a variety of styles. The handbook contains the texts of all the poems and some notes on strategies for use. It also gives illustrations of how the texts look on screen at the start of a session. Ripe for Development is an anthology only and does not include the Developing Tray program, which you will need. The two packages can be bought together or separately.

Published by ILECC.
Available from LETSS

SIMTEX

IBM
Nimbus
Price £24

Simtex is a telex simulator, a program which turns the computer into a telex machine capable of managing and delivering messages from a file prepared in advance. Telex messages are created using a built-in editor. In delivery mode Simtex displays the telexes in the order determined by the times stored with each message. Messages and times can be edited. Simtex can be used to drive any simulation which involves activities determined by a flow of information. (See Newsroom, page 16)

Published by ITEM

SPEED READER

IBM
(DOS or Windows)
Price £39.95

This program is designed for ages 14+ and contains 35 reading texts, all of which are for more advanced readers. Texts can be added using the editor. It claims to greatly improve reading speeds as well as increasing comprehension. After several introductory screens, the program begins with warm-up exercises which consist of 2, 3 or 4 letters or words which flash in the centre of the screen, and are then typed in. The speed increases or decreases according to how quickly letters are entered. All the exercises encourage reading words in groups. The *Eye Movement* exercise is designed to keep the eye moving across the page. In *Column Reading* the text appears in groups of two or three words which are centred on each line with a vertical line to help keep the eye centred. Other activities are speed reading and a timed reading test. After each reading there is an optional quiz which consists of comprehension questions. All the activities offer a choice of speeds from 100-2000wpm. The speeds vary depending on the computer used . The program is more suitable for intermediate plus readers who wish to read more quickly.

Published by Davidson.
European distributor
ABLAC

SPELL IT PLUS!

Apple Mac
IBM
Price £39.95

For ages 10 – adult, this program provides five activities to practise spelling. Graphics, sound and speech are optional. The exercises are clear and simple and there is an editing facility to add your own words. *Study It*, at its easiest level, allows the student to see a word and copy it into a sentence which appears below. Later, letters are removed and then the word simply flashes on the screen. Spelling rules are shown where appropriate. In *Decode It* missing letters are to be filled in and in *Correct It*, the student corrects spellings where necessary. *Unscramble It* is an anagrams game. The final activity is a speed game where the task is to decide if a word is correctly spelled; a hurdling frog 'eats' the words you choose. Apart from the game, which is childish, students would find the tasks familiar, and the program may prove useful in providing a further means of practising spelling.

Published by Davidson.
European distributor
ABLAC

STARTING OUT

Nimbus
Price £24.95

Described as a life skills development pack for adults in basic education, this pack has three topic areas map reading, food and pop stars. Touch Explorer Plus files have concept keyboard overlays of a town map, food in a supermarket and pictures of six pop stars. These are used for giving directions, buying food and finding out details of the pop stars' life and music. There is a second disk with a Grass database which contains further information about the pop stars and their music, which enables more exploratory work to be done on this topic. The accompanying concept keyboard overlays and other support materials are of high quality and give useful suggestions for other activities for students to undertake. As pictures do not define abilities as rigidly as words, the range of users could be quite wide and would also encompass ESOL students.

Published by NCET

STORYBOARD

Apple Mac
IBM
Price £75 (up to 5 users)

Storyboard is a text reconstruction program where all the letters in a text are replaced by markers, with the title, spacing and punctuation remaining on screen. Students begin with guesswork, then use contextual clues to reconstruct the text word by word. Once a correct word is entered, all instances of that word are placed into the text. There are various levels of help including single letters, whole words and view whole text. A performance summary gives a breakdown of right and wrong answers given, details of the help features that were used and a score. It is easy to enter Storyboard texts and they can be linked to any other area of work. The program would be best used after some introductory work, so that the initial guesswork is minimised.

Published by Wida

STORYMAKER

Apple Mac
Price £29.95

Although designed for children to write and illustrate their own stories, many adults could well enjoy using this tool to produce illustrated creative writing, particularly if they are working in family literacy groups. It operates through HyperCard on the Mac and combines writing, painting and drawing with the use of sound and animation to produce linear and branching stories. The theory is that people are motivated to write by using illustration as a starting point; simple animation and the use of sounds encourage users to develop story lines. Text can be typed directly on to the Storymaker page, or imported from a wordprocessor. Word lists at the bottom of the page can be customised so that the user can choose the word they want by clicking on it. Graphics can be scanned images, imported from other programs, or from clip-art, and then modified in StoryMaker if needed. Some graphics are included, but these were designed for work with children. Sounds can be added using the Audio palette which comes with HyperCard2.

Available from NCET

SURVEY

Nimbus
Price £28

Survey consists of three programs designed to create and print a questionnaire, record responses and present results as tables, bar charts or pie charts. Although a survey can contain open-ended questions, the program can only analyse responses to multi-choice questions where the response is chosen from a given list. The program is easy to operate through a system of menus and on-screen instructions. The handbook explains the different parts of the package, and also contains guidance on planning a survey. The program was developed to support GCSE Social Science projects; it could be equally useful for Wordpower or Numberpower assignments. A sample survey is included in the package, both in the handbook and on disk; it is a survey on who does the housework in your household, a topic appropriate for all ages.

Published by ILECC.
Available from LETSS

TELEPHONE TALK 1 & 2

IBM,
Apple Mac
Price £99 per disk,
£175 for two disks

These programs provide students with an opportunity to practise and improve their telephone skills, and include on screen photographs and graphics to create a realistic environment in which to work on almost 200 dialogues. The skills covered include understanding names and numbers, taking messages, making appointments and giving directions. If your computer has sound recording facilities, students can record their own voices and compare them with a native speaker model. The programs are supplied on separate CDs.

Published by Libra Multimedia Ltd.
Available from dealers

TESTMASTER

Testmaster provides situations to which the user enters an appropriate response. This is judged by the computer to be right or wrong. An example situation is: 'You got drunk last night and now you feel awful. Regret getting drunk.' The response: 'I wish I hadn't drunk so much' was considered wrong. The program seems to be an exercise in reading the programmer's mind, but the instructions explain that the computer's answers are limited and that the student should discuss possible responses with a teacher.

Apple Mac
IBM
Price £75 (up to 5 users)

Published by Wida

TEXTPLAY

Textplay contains three programs to explore texts, which are entered through the text editor. The first activity, *Context*, is a complete cloze, which has no letters or punctuation, only dashes, but the text can be previewed. It is very challenging. In *Hotline* all the lines in a text are rearranged and the task is to put them in the correct order. In *Space Out* the text appears with all the punctuation, spaces and capital letters taken out.

IBM
Price £30 protected
£45 unprotected

Published by Cambridge ELT Software

THINKSHEET

Thinksheet is a content-free program designed for brainstorming, organising and developing ideas. A card can be placed on screen, and something typed on to it. Different ideas can be placed in different cards. A door can be added to any card, allowing that card to open on to a new level on a new screen where a set of cards and ideas developed from the previous level can be built up. Thus a hierarchical structure of ideas can be developed. Cards can be moved around the screen, or between levels. Cards can be split into two, or joined together. At any point, ideas can be viewed either as continuous text, or in a list (outline), or in a numbered list. Work can be saved, either as a 'Thinksheet' or as a file to be loaded into a wordprocessor, and can also be printed out. The program is very flexible and easy to use. It can be used for planning essays, brainstorming in a group, planning activities (fundraising, outings, etc), planning a programme of work, building up a CV, in fact any activity where you would start off by jotting down ideas. The advantage over using a wordprocessor or pen and paper is the ease with which ideas (cards) can be moved around, thus using visual presentation to help organise thoughts. Teachers could use Thinksheet to develop reading activities such as branching stories or sequencing exercises. This is a powerful tool with many applications and is recommended for use across the curriculum.

Archimedes
IBM
Nimbus
Price £39

Published by Fisher Marriott Software

USING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Using the English Language is a computer-based training course designed for use with adults in a range of learning situations. There are nine lessons, each focussing on one language area including formal letters, writing descriptions, report writing and summarising. The running time for each lesson is one hour and users can repeat lessons. There is a mentor program which demonstrates sample exercises.

IBM
Price £595

Published by Eurotech

VOCAB

Apple Mac IBM
Price £75 (up to 5 users)
Published by Wida

This program has a range of exercises including *Word order, Hangman* (called Skullman), *Anagrams and Mindword*. All are designed to reinforce vocabulary, both in recognition and production.

WHERE IN THE WORLD IS CARMEN SANDIEGO?

Apple Mac
IBM
Price £29.78
CD: £56.16

This is an entertaining game which can be used to practise research and reference skills. Carmen is the leader of a gang of international criminals who steal such treasures as the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel and Cleopatra's Asp. The player takes on the role of detective to track down the criminals. Two kinds of clue are offered: personal information which builds up into a profile of the criminal so that a warrant for his/her arrest can be issued, and information about the thirty countries where Carmen and her gang may be found. Currency, national flags, geography, industry and government are among the clues. All the answers can be found in the 900-page World Almanac which accompanies the disk. The almanac is densely packed with detail and the print is small, so this game is only appropriate for students with good reading skills. Alternative versions are also available: Where in Europe...? Where in the USA...? and Where in time...?

Published by Electronic Arts.
Available from dealers

WINDOWS CONCEPT

IBM
Price £39

Windows Concept is an overlay keyboard utility which can be used with any program designed to run under Microsoft Windows. The user guide is clearly written, containing ideas for use, and a Concept Keyboard Compatibility Guide. The package includes sample overlay files developed with school leavers with moderate learning difficulties which provide useful models for the development of materials for basic skills. Files are created through Concept Editor, which is straightforward to use with on-screen help available. This program facilitates access to modern computers for those students who benefit from using a concept keyboard.

Published by The Advisory Unit: Computers in Education

WORD ATTACK 3

Apple Mac
IBM
Price £39.95

Word lists covering specialist areas as well as general vocabulary come with this program and the editing facility makes it possible for any other word list to be added. The program provides five activities through which a student can learn and practice words, including matching the word to its definition, typing it into a blank space and a crossword puzzle. On screen presentation is clear and the words are easy to read, but some of the animated graphics and game-like activities may not appeal to adult users. If a sound card is fitted students can hear the word pronounced, which would benefit learners who are speakers of other languages. There is a record keeping facility which allows student records to be kept and viewed on screen or printed out. It is also possible to print out flash cards, and randomly created wordsearch puzzles or crossword puzzles. All the word lists which come with the program are printed in the back of the accompanying booklet.

Published by Davidson. European distributor ABLAC

Word Games

Word Games contains *Snap*, *Memory* and *Wordsquare*, three games which aim to help word-recognition skills and elementary reading. The package also includes a wordsearch program. Snap can only be played by two people, but the other games can be used individually. The words to be practised can be chosen and entered either by student or teacher. Once past the initial screens of information and instructions the games are easy to use.

Archimedes
IBM
Nimbus
Price £38.50

Published by AVP Computing

Wordplay

This is exactly what it says. There are four programs to play with words and an authoring program so that relevant word lists can be used. In *Scrambler* the words of well known phrases or sayings are in the wrong order, for example, 'sight of out mind of'. In *Flasher*, words or sentences are flashed on screen which the user then types. An anagram appears on the screen in *Anagramma*; the user has a given time to type in the correct word, which can be quite difficult with words such as apologetic. When time runs out, BANG! appears on the screen and the time limit cannot be changed. In the final activity a topic such as countries is chosen. The task is to guess which one the computer is thinking of. There are clues such as longer, shorter, later, earlier. All the programs are designed as games so there are lots of beeps and swordfighters falling off screens. The sound can be turned low but not off.

IBM
Price £30 protected
£45 unprotected

Published by Cambridge ELT Software

Wordprocessing for Literacy Skills

See page 42

Wordsquare

This program is designed for teachers to prepare wordsearch exercises which can be printed out. The required words are typed in then the program places them in a grid and fills up the remaining squares with random letters. The initial list of options on screen uses quite complex language.

IBM Nimbus
Price £13

Published by Software Production Assoc. (SPA)

Wordstore

Two activities are offered in this program. Users can browse through dictionary style entries, each one containing a word, its definition or synonym and a sample sentence. There is also a test, where a word appears on screen and the task is to type in the definition, or vice versa.

IBM
Price £75 (up to 5 users)

Published by Wida

Writer's Toolkit

This program allows for the thorough structuring of the writing process from initial brainstorm to the final printed article through a series of steps called tools. The first tool, *WordBuilder*, is a separate application which can be accessed independently from the main program and can be used for an initial collection of words and phrases. It allows a relevant wordbank to be built up which can be transferred from the bank directly into the writing if required. From startup the writer is offered *Writing Choice*, initially three main types: imaginative, personal and functional; within functional there is the further choice of experiment report, visit report, instructions or lists, newspaper report, letter, review, two sided argument and single viewpoint report. Having chosen the style of writing the next screen offers space to type in the purpose of the writing and the audience it hopes to address.

Apple Mac
Price £49.95

Published by SCET

From hereon the writing proper begins, first with *NoteMaker* which provides a bulleted screen for making notes. These can be random and then sorted into order using structure maker. Moving on into *DraftMaker*, notes appear on screen with a line between each and the writer has the opportunity to expand them and turn them into complete sentences. The final stage of writing, proofreading, takes place in *ProofMaker* where there is an opportunity to look at spelling and punctuation. The check on spelling is not a spellchecker in the wordprocessing sense but an opportunity to highlight words the writer is unsure of, either for misspelling or usage. The text can be printed out with the highlighted words underlined to allow off-screen consultation with teacher, other students or dictionary. The punctuation check notes the number of full stops in a paragraph and comments if there are less than two. When proofreading has been completed the program moves into the *Word Processor* for layout, text formatting and importing of graphics. With this completed the text can be printed out.

Most students would need to have some initial instruction on how to use this program but with its clear onscreen instructions and prompts, logical progression and good documentation it should not be long before they are working alone. In keeping with good practice Writer's Toolkit also allows the writer to evaluate their progress and the teacher to comment on it using *RecordMaker*.

Writing with Symbols

Archimedes
IBM
Writing with Symbols
Price £40
Symbol Collection
Price £35

As its name suggests, *Writing with Symbols* is a writing program which displays symbols or pictures as well as text. As words are typed at the keyboard, each time the spacebar is pressed to move to the next word, the program tries to match the word typed to a picture; if it can find a match the picture is displayed. The program uses *The Symbol Collection* which contains over 1500 symbols, this is provided on separate disks and will be upgradable as the symbol base develops. Additional utilities allow more words to be attached to existing symbols, and new graphics can be added via the lexicon editor. Word lists can also be edited to detach some words from their symbols, so, for example, symbols for *the, is, in*, etc. can be removed if not required. The symbols can be displayed in different sizes, line thickness and colour; the full range of fonts and sizes available on your computer can be used. Writing can be printed as text only, symbols only, or both combined. The program also has a speech facility; sound can be provided by an external speech synthesiser, or internally if your computer is fitted with a sound card. Text can be spoken as it is written, or afterwards; words, sentences, paragraphs or the whole document can be spoken. *Writing with Symbols* has been developed in conjunction with the Spastics Society School at Meldreth Manor; it will have wide-ranging uses across the curriculum for literacy and ESOL students. Word lists can be created to support different vocational areas, the level of symbol support can be reduced as required (a function key can be used to switch off unwanted pictures), worksheets can be illustrated to support reading; spelling can be helped through symbol association, easily confused words such as *witch/which, there/their* become immediately apparent; students could use symbols in their writing and print out text only. This is an excellent program and very simple to use.

Published by Widget Software

Software for Numeracy

The Art Machine Pattern Programs

These programs, designed to link Maths with Art, were developed for an art exhibition in Glasgow where visitors were encouraged to experiment. The programs are easy to operate using a mouse to click on large icons, and can be used by students across a wide range of levels of mathematical ability. The programs are accompanied by the Art Machine Pattern Book which contains beautifully coloured patterns produced with the programs, and activities to encourage further investigations. These programs have nothing to do with functional numeracy, but they will certainly attract attention around a screen, and may well stimulate an interest in mathematical investigations.

Archimedes
Price £30

Published by Leapfrogs. Available from Topologika

Baker

See page 30

Baselines

See page 8

CIA Spreadsheets

See page 56

Complete Maths Workshop

GCSE mathematics is a computer-based learning package designed to teach, test and assess individual progress through the GCSE mathematics curriculum. The material is divided into three levels: foundation, intermediate and higher. Each level is covered in three separate packs, and each pack contains approximately 30 modules. A pack (for example, foundation level pack B) is supplied in an A4 flip-top box which contains for each module a card with the module objective, a disk, and student worksheets. There is a teacher's guide which includes a summary of modules in the pack, and a set of completed worksheets. At the start of a module the student is asked to log-in by typing their first name, last name and group number. This information allows progress to be monitored by a teacher and a personal certificate of achievement to be printed out; it is also used to address the student personally by first name in the tutorials. Each module has three options: instructions, tutorial and unit test. The tutorials are delivered 'largely through worked examples, with some definitions. A review option at the end of most worked examples enables the student to read through the section again. Examples are followed by a two-part assessment to test understanding. The assessment is supported by worksheets which are clearly presented and could be used independently. If the student answers the first question incorrectly the relevant part of the tutorial will be repeated; a second incorrect answer will refer the student to a tutor for help. The second part is a short exercise which the student completes on paper, before copying answers in to the computer for checking. A success rate of 80% or more will allow the student to progress to the next part of the tutorial. A lower mark will direct the student to seek help from a teacher. The Unit test consists of five questions chosen at random from a bank of 25. The student is allowed two attempts at answering each question. A percentage result and the time taken is given at the end of the test.

IBM
Complete Maths Workshop (CMW): Price £995
Foundation: Price £395 (3 x £140 per pack)
Intermediate: Price £395 (3 x £140 per pack)
Higher: Price £395 (3 x £140 per pack)
Complete Maths Workshop on CD: Price £149

Published by Systems Integrated Research

Tutorial screens are generally uncluttered, with information presented in stages and not too much on the screen. Fractions are not always easy to read, and student answers have to be typed in 'computer speak' with the correct spacing (ie. 2 1/3 for two and one third) for them to be recognised as correct.

Complete Maths Workshop is essentially a computerised text-book delivered in instalments with exercises marked on completion, and the facility for a teacher to monitor the progress of a group of students. It is a reading-based program which may be useful for students who wish to brush up on skills or test their progress. The foundation level covers all the numeracy skills which are likely to be needed by the majority of adult students and which might be assumed at the start of a GCSE Maths course. Foundation Level Pack A covers whole numbers, fractions and decimals, but examples are not contextualised.

Diet Manager II

Archimedes
Price £35
Diet Manager Extra
Price £55

Diet manager allows you to plan your diet to meet your needs. Information on screen is attractively presented through charts, tables and graphics. The program is mouse driven and easy to use. The section *Targets* gives guidance on recommended weights according to height, age and sex. The user can enter time spent on various activities from three categories: work, recreation or everyday and the energy (calories) expended daily is calculated. The recommended daily allowances for calories, fats, proteins, fibre, and carbohydrate are shown. The Diet Manager then allows the user to plan menus according to those recommended allowances. Foods from a wide range of categories are chosen and placed on the menu. The amount of protein, energy, and carbohydrate contained in each serving appear on the right of the screen so that changes can be made to the menu. Bar and pie charts can be produced of the various nutrients forming a meal and these and the menus can be printed out. Diet Manager is a good resource for a range of numeracy activities including understanding information from tables and charts. Additional information is provided in a new version, *Diet Manager Extra*.

Published by MEWsoft

The Food Program

Nimbus
Price £35

The Food Program is designed to provide practice in planning a balanced diet. There are two parts: the *Recipe Program* allows you to compile and edit recipes. Full details of nutritional value are provided and calculated for each recipe. In the *Food Program*, the user builds menus and examines them in relation to recommended daily allowances. Menus are displayed as bar or pie charts showing levels of nutrients. The program is accompanied by teachers' notes and a food code book. This contains a wide range of foods in categories, with the code number needed to enter the food into the program. To enter a full meal requires considerable time looking for the correct food codes. The teachers' notes are easy to follow and the suggestions for use are helpful. Particularly useful is the set of worksheets, which are designed to explore all aspects of the program.

Published by ILECC.
Available from LETSS

Healthdata

See page 50

Introducing Mathematics

IBM
Price £545

Introducing Mathematics is a computer-based training course designed for use with adults in a range of learning situations. There are eight lessons, each focussing on one area including decimals, percentages, areas and volumes and measurements. The running time for each lesson is one hour and users can repeat lessons. There is a mentor program which demonstrates sample exercises.

Published by Eurotech

IT and Basic Skills – A Training Pack for Tutors

See page 41

IT in Business

Nimbus
Price £28

This is a set of three very basic simulations, designed for use in secondary schools but appropriate for numeracy work with adult students. *Cash Dispenser* takes a student through the process of withdrawing cash and/or obtaining other services from a cashpoint. A range of PIN and account numbers are supplied, with information on funds available. In *Point of Sale* students input information to obtain bills and sales analysis for eat-in or take-out customers in a Chinese restaurant. *Hotel Reception* involves a range of activities concerned with booking rooms and billing customers. The accompanying handbook supplies information needed to use the programs, for example, a list of names and room numbers for the hotel. The lesson notes are useful, as is the resource material for photocopying. IT in Business could be used either with a group or individual learners. Supplementary material would be helpful to guide students through the simulations, and to integrate the computer work with the general themes of banking, sales and bookings.

Published by ILECC. Available from LETSS

L – A Mathemagical Adventure

Archimedes
IBM
Nimbus
Price £14.95

This is an adventure game which can be described as a text-based quest. The aim is to travel through a story overcoming obstacles and solving problems until you succeed in your quest. In L the quest is to help an abbot to find a girl captured by Grey Drogos who inhabit the palace which is the scene of the adventure. Success depends on the solution of mathematical problems which involve square roots, shapes of solids, ratios, writing codes, map drawing and much more. Progress through the game is by typing in typical adventure commands such as north, south, east, west, follow, look, take object, etc. Adventure games can be frustrating or addictive. For students who enjoy them, A Mathemagical Adventure will stimulate discussions and investigations around mathematical topics.

Published by The Association of Teachers of Mathematics (ATM)

LOGO

Apple Mac
Microworlds Price £80
LogoWriter Price £89.95
Archimedes
Logotron LOGO Price £69
IBM
LogoWriter Price £69.95
Windows Logo Price £80
WinLogo Price £99

LOGO is a programming language used in maths for its turtle graphics (although this is only one aspect of LOGO). The turtle is a small triangle on screen which can be moved around by typing commands at the keyboard, and it can leave a line tracing out its path. It can move forwards or backwards and can turn left or right through a specified number of degrees. LOGO introduces students to basic geometry, and provides practice in number skills and the stimation of angles and distance. Learning LOGO develops problem-solving skills. The fundamental philosophy of LOGO is that the student is in control of the learning process.

Students will need instructions on LOGO commands and how to write procedures, they may also need source material to stimulate LOGO explorations – Islamic patterns are one possible source of inspiration. There are several different versions of LOGO available for different computers, and they vary in sophistication – for example, it may be possible to work with multiple turtles, with different pen widths and in colour. *Microworlds Project Builder*, an American program for the Apple Mac, provides multimedia authoring with Logo.

Logotron LOGO for Archimedes, WinLogo for IBM available from Longman Logotron.
Windows Logo for IBM (needs Windows 3.1), available from The Advisory Unit: Computers in Education.
LogoWriter for Apple Mac and IBM, available from Valiant Technology Ltd.
Microworlds Project Builder for Apple Mac, available from Valiant Technology Ltd.

Math Blaster Mystery

Apple Mac
IBM
Price £39.95

Designed for age 10 – adult. Math Blaster Mystery offers four activities at a range of levels to develop number skills. It has optional sound and graphics. The program provides a scoring system and progress reports as students move through the levels. If you wished to, you could progress from Computation Cadet, through to Chief Problem Solver. *Follow the Step* takes you through the process of solving mathematical problems, by first identifying the problem, then deciding what information is needed, how to calculate, and finally, the answer. The user is guided through this process by multiple-choice questions. Many of the problems use situations and language appropriate to adults, but you can also add your own using the editor, which is not quite as simple as it looks. *Weigh the Evidence* gives practice in number order, addition and problem-solving. The task is to determine which numbered weights add up to a given number and to arrange these in numerical order. The task can be done at four levels. Level one includes numbers up to 100, level four mixes fractions and decimals. In *Decipher the Code* a blank equation appears on screen. After initial guesswork by the user, the right numbers, if any, are indicated and the student uses these clues to complete the equation. *Search for Clues* is a framework for deducing a number where clues are given until the answer is found. The activity itself is useful, the accompanying graphics of household items less so.

Published by Davidson. European distributor ABLAC

MicroSMILE: The First 31, The Next 17, 11 More

Archimedes
Numbus
First 31, Next 17 and 11 More each pack £30
IBM
Windows 1 Price £30
Windows 2 Price £20

The SMILE programs were developed as an integral part of the secondary mathematics individual learning scheme. However, the programs can be used independently and provide a wide range of activities at different levels. The programs are essentially investigative and make full use of the graphic capabilities of the computer; they are not sums on screen. Use with adult students needs to be selective as a small proportion of the 59 programs are childish. Since programs are easily accessed from a main menu it is important that students are offered guidance to choose a program at the right time to support their learning. Several programs are particularly useful for basic numeracy, covering topics such as place value, operations on whole numbers, factors, multiples, ordering fractions, and multiplication and division by 10, 100 and 1000. Other programs support topics in the GCSE maths curriculum. MicroSMILE is distributed in three separate packs, each accompanied with a handbook describing the programs. Windows discs are being developed in themes containing fewer programs. *Windows 1: Number pattern investigations* and *Windows 2: Angle measure* are now available.

Published by SMILE. Available from the SMILE Centre

NEWTOWN

See page 17

NUMBERMAZE

NumberMaze is an enjoyable means of practising maths. On screen is a maze, the objective is a house and to reach it the user has to solve a series of mathematical problems. The problems that are included use the four rules at a range of levels and problems can also be entered to make the exercise directly relevant to current work. It is, essentially, 'sums on the screen', but imaginatively presented and making good use of graphics. A fractions and decimals version is available for the Apple Mac.

Apple Mac
IBM
Price £40.50

Published by Electronic Arts.
Available from dealers

NUMERATOR

Numerator is a program which enables the user to build on-screen 'mathematical machines' or 'number plumbing systems' to demonstrate and explore mathematical operations and relationships. It is described by the author as 'a visual model to represent the processes of mathematics'. Systems can be very simple, for example, an adding machine, or more complex, say, a machine to calculate VAT, or very sophisticated, depending on your mathematical knowledge. It is also possible to print out graphs illustrating the function of some machines. Some time needs to be spent getting to grips with the operation of the program. Introductory files called *Walkthroughs* are supplied but teachers will need to prepare instruction sheets, and suggest appropriate tasks to encourage students to exploit the program. Numerator encourages an investigative approach to numeracy and maths, and since it is content-free, its use can be integrated into many areas of the numeracy curriculum.

Archimedes
Price £39
IBM
Nimbus
Price £49
Windows
Price £49

Published by Longman Logotron

SPREADSHEETS FOR MATHEMATICS & IT

See page 57

SPREADSHEETS FROM SMILE

See page 57

SURVEY

See page 20

TABLES MASTER

Learning, practising and testing tables is provided in this suite of programs. Students are given the opportunity to learn or revise their tables with Tables Learner and to be tested with Tables Tester. Testing with Tables Tester is by keying in the answer to the selected table(s). Progress information, including the percentage of correct answers, can be accessed at any time. Worksheets of random tables can be printed out for use off screen. Screen presentation is clear, the numbers are a good size and the program is easy to use.

Apple Mac
Price £25

Published by The Flexible Learning Company

WORLD COUNT

See page 51

Software for Work Skills

Action Planning

Guidelines for writing an action plan are provided in this program. Prompts include noting past achievements, setting targets for learning or training, how to achieve these aims and when to review the plan. The program was designed for school leavers but could also be used by other learners.

Archimedes Price £29
IBM Nimbus
Price £39.50
Windows Price £49

Published by Careersoft.

Baker

This is part of a modular computer education course designed to assist the integration of computer-based work with existing subject curricula in schools. This mathematics module simulates the running of a small business. The accompanying handbook is aimed at school teachers and refers to pupils and classroom organisation. However, the bulk of the handbook consists of information sheets and worksheets which are clearly presented and suitable for adults (although some assignments are set as homework). The simulation is in three stages: stage one introduces the idea of running a bakery, and information on existing customers is provided to enable the first week's baking to be planned. Problems emerge which have to be solved. In stage two the bakery expands to take on new customers which involves recalculating stock requirements. In stage three the user starts running the business again expanding at their own pace which may involve buying more equipment, increasing labour hours, obtaining more premises and seeking a bank loan. At the end of the simulation a report has to be produced. The worksheets provide guidance on making decisions and using the program. The program itself has a simple screen presentation and limited commands making it easy to operate. Materials will need to be organised into assignments for students but this should then provide a resource which can be used independently.

Nimbus
Price £25

Published by Oxfordshire County Council

Basic Food Hygiene Training

This software is intended to support a competence-based assessment programme produced by Wigan & Leigh College for the Basic Food Hygiene Certificate; however, it can be bought separately and used on catering courses to reinforce and revise safe food handling procedures. The program is presented in four modules: Food Poisoning, The Food Handler, The Food and The Workplace. Each module presents information in small amounts and tests the student's knowledge and understanding. There is some feedback on answers, and the program keeps track of scores. Graphics and animation (plus photographs on the IBM version and sound on the Mac), although not of wonderful quality, are used throughout, and text is kept to a minimum. The program is very easy to use and the presentation takes account of the needs of students with basic levels of literacy.

Apple Mac
IBM
Price £45

Published by Wigan & Leigh College

CIA Database

See page 46

CIA Spreadsheets

See page 56

CV and letter of application

The program gives guidelines and tasks to enable the student to produce a CV and letter of application. The information and guidelines are well thought out and clearly presented, although there is a fair amount of reading. The letter of application program goes through the different parts of the letter: address, opening sentence, body and endings, in a given format. The screen suggestions are helpful. The programs were designed for school leavers, which is apparent in the occasional reference to schools. A windows version is available and includes a spellchecker and, as an optional extra, a speech facility.

Archimedes
Price £29
IBM
Nimbus
Price £49

Published by Careersoft

Effective English for Business Letters

The program provides information and practice in language areas relevant to business letters. These are: punctuation, words (spelling, meaning, choosing the best word), good English and sentence length. The computer exercises are accompanied by a coursebook which is quite brief, but useful. The course is appropriate for those students with a high level of literacy skills, who wish to move onto the more complex language of business. The discrimination exercises, for example, include classics like stationery/ary but also illegible/ineligible, formerly/formally. There is a substantial amount of reading involved. The program itself is easy to use, with clear options and examples. It covers areas such as redundancy, jargon and officialese and how to avoid these. It does not include layout. It would supplement other work on business letters.

IBM
Price £70

Published by Dean Associates

EPOS

Electronic Point of Sale is a retailing system where the tills within a store are linked to a computer. This program simulates a till in the wine and spirits department of a store. The first task for the user is to enter information on stock and sales assistants. The user then acts the role of sales assistant using the program to process customer orders and take payments. The user can log on as manager to see statistical information for the whole store, update stocks, reprice goods and change staffing. The worksheets and guide give clear step-by-step instructions on how to perform the above tasks. The worksheets, answer sheets and guide make it appropriate for an open learning environment.

Archimedes under PC emulator
IBM
Nimbus under PC emulator
Price £39

Published by CIA Training Ltd.

Fast Food

This program is a simulation of running a fast food stall at an exhibition. It was produced for EFL and has an authoring facility. The task is to order the food needed and set the price. Newsflashes appear at intervals which may affect buying and pricing strategies. It is designed for use in a group, but could be used individually. There is some potential for use in ABE and ESOL in the areas of numeracy, problem-solving and employment training.

IBM
Price £30 protected
£45 unprotected

Published by Cambridge ELT Software

Forms

See page 11

Healthdata

See page 50

Health Matters

See page 13

In the Garden

Nimbus
Price £22.50

This is a concept keyboard pack for adult learners arising from a practical project based on work in a greenhouse. The aims of the pack are: to provide ready-to-use files and overlays to use with the concept keyboard; to illustrate how these materials can be used as part of a wider learning process; to make tutors aware of framework software; and to provide some guidance on how to create files for any group of students or trainees. The pack contains 11 keyboard overlays (A3 and A4), both pictures and text, which enable students to undertake a range of activities from recording work done, practising language skills in context, and reinforcing understanding of health and safety, gardening processes, seasonal tasks, etc. Students can progress through six language levels. The disks include a version of Touch Explorer and Prompt/Writer sufficient to access the files, but a full working version is essential to create your own files.

Published by NCET

IT in Business

See page 27

Journey into Safety

See page 15

Office Diary

Archimedes under PC emulator
IBM
Nimbus under PC emulator
Price £39

Office Diary is a simulation of the organisation of a busy personnel office by an administrative assistant. There are four workers whose appointments are logged in the diary. During the day meetings are added, changed, and cancelled and the task is to keep the diary up to date by amending entries when necessary. Three detailed worksheets provide the necessary information and then assess the user's efficiency through assessment exercises. Answers are provided. There is on-screen help and a diary can be saved so that users can return to their work. The user guide has clear instructions and contains the completed diaries for self checking. The program would be useful as part of office skills development. The worksheets, answer sheets and guide make it appropriate for an open learning environment.

Published by CIA Training Ltd.

Sports Diary

Archimedes under PC emulator
IBM
Nimbus under PC emulator
Price £39

Sports diary is a simulation of the organisation of a busy sports club. The user's role is to keep the diary up to date and ensure that no double booking takes place, or that facilities are left idle. The four areas which can be booked are a gym, two squash courts and a snooker hall. The worksheets with answers provide a series of tasks concerning customers wishing to book and pay for facilities. Takings can be calculated and booking can be printed. A diary can be saved so that users can return to their work later. The worksheets, answer sheets and guide make it appropriate for an open learning environment.

Published by CIA Training Ltd.

TELEPHONE TALK 1 & 2

See page 20

WAREHOUSE

This is a simulation of managing stock control in a warehouse which supplies goods to businesses. The worksheets guide the user through the simulation to carry out a range of tasks involved in stock control. Firstly, the user inputs data on products available in the warehouse to create the data file used in the following tasks. The tasks include processing orders, checking stock levels, changing data and viewing the day's profits.The worksheets, answer sheets and guide make it appropriate for an open learning environment.

Archimedes under PC emulator
IBM
Nimbus under PC emulator
Price £39

Published by CIA Training Ltd.

WORKROOM

Workroom is a pack of open learning materials designed to support students seeking to develop office skills with a view to employment. The materials are based on the activities of a fictitious District Council. The pack is in two parts: office skills and computer skills. The office skills section, which can be used and bought independently of the computer section, introduces students to the basics of office practice. There is a particular emphasis on skills with a strong language content including filing, using the telephone, writing memos and letters, working in the mailroom and using reference books. The computer section consists of tutorials, assignments and a reference guide. The tutorials are intended to introduce students to the uses of a wordprocessor, a database and a spreadsheet in a business setting, using the Microsoft Works program (datafiles are supplied with the pack, but not the Microsoft Works program). Each tutorial contains sets of exercises followed by an activity which exploits the office-skills content of the set. The assignments simulate working situations in which the student takes on the role of a clerical worker in various departments of the council. Stationery is provided for use in the assignments. The reference guide is intended as support for the assignments and covers the major commands of the Works program (although it is not a complete guide to Works). The pack also contains a cassette which supports exercises in the Office Skills section (answering machine messages and British Rail Talking Timetable) and two of the assignments. Answers to exercises are provided throughout, including model answers to assignments. A progress sheet enables students to keep a record of their progress through Workroom, and a tutor's guide gives an overview of the materials and how they might be used. This is a comprehensive pack of learning materials based on the Performance Standards for Administrative, Business and Commercial Staff (the ABC Guide). It is aimed particularly at ESOL students who need language support in the development of office skills, but it will be useful for any student seeking to acquire such skills.

IBM
Nimbus under PC emulator
Complete set Price £225
Business Administration Price £60
New Technology Tutorials Price £65
Assignments Price £70
Reference Guide Price £50

Published by National Extension College (NEC)

WORK ROSTER

This is a simulation of computer-aided planning of staffing schedules in a retail environment. There are eight employees and four tasks in the store: supervisor, till, sales floor and shelf stocking. The user allocates these tasks and plans breaks and days off. There is a six day working week; rosters for Monday to Friday contain data and Saturday is left blank for the user to complete. The accompanying worksheets guide the user through the simulation, demonstrating how the roster can be changed and checked. The user guide, although only four pages long, is clear and contains sufficient information. The worksheets, answer sheets and guide make it appropriate for an open learning environment.

Archimedes under PC emulator
IBM
Nimbus under PC emulator
Price £39

Published by CIA Training Ltd.

Using a wordprocessor

WORDPROCESSORS

A wordprocessor is a writing tool. It enables you to create, edit, manipulate, store and retrieve text.

USING A WORDPROCESSOR TO DEVELOP LITERACY SKILLS

The purpose in using a wordprocessor is to aid the process of writing, whether it be creative writing, or writing essays, letters, reports, etc. The editing and redrafting facilities offered by a wordprocessor are likely to improve written work at all levels. However, in order to benefit from the facilities offered by a wordprocessor, it is necessary to learn how to use it effectively (this is essential for a sophisticated professional program, but the process need not be so rigorous for a simple educational program).

Learning how to use a particular wordprocessing program offers tremendous scope for the development of literacy skills at all levels. Student can be encouraged to work independently if you provide:

Instructions

Clear instructions on how to operate the program: instruction sheets need to take account of the language level of the student, and if they are independent of tasks, they can be used for any different number of exercises. Instructions can also be provided on tape.

Exercises

Literacy exercises stored on disk which the student can access: exercises can cover a wide range of language tasks such as spelling, punctuation, tenses, vocabulary, sequencing, comprehension, etc., at different levels, using different wordprocessing techniques.

It is easier for the student if initial exercises concentrate on a single language task and introduce only one new wordprocessing skill. It is also helpful if initial exercises are short enough to fit on the screen without the use of scrolling.

If you provide exercises on paper as well as on disk, the language task can be tackled separately if necessary, before the student goes to the computer.

Answers to exercises can be provided on paper or as part of the text file which contains the exercise, to enable self-checking.

If students want to access wordprocessing files independently, you will need to provide an index of exercises with information about the literacy skill to be practised and the wordprocessing skills to be learned.

Across the curriculum

This approach to using a wordprocessor to develop literacy skills can also be used to develop numeracy skills (by preparing exercises with a numeracy content) or office skills (where exercises will focus on office procedures and tasks). In fact learning to use a wordprocessor can be combined with any subject area through adapting the content of the exercises, using methods such as cloze procedure, gap filling, proof reading, sequencing, etc.

Types of program

Educational

An educational wordprocessor will not offer such a wide range of facilities as a professional program, but it may offer additional features, such as on-screen wordbanks, to support students in their writing. A number of programs now offer speech facilities enabling text to be spoken, either as it is typed, or afterwards – this is an area where development will continue to improve the quality of the speech output. Some educational wordprocessors are available in community languages which can be useful in ESOL work.

Professional

A professional wordprocessor will offer a wide range of functions, and should include a spellchecker and thesaurus. Students who wish to acquire wordprocessing skills with a view to employment will need access to a professional wordprocessor. You might want to use the one favoured by local employers: if there are several, choose the one which is easiest to use.

Other students, including those with a basic level of literacy, can also benefit from using a professional program. It is a mistake to use literacy skills as an indicator of potential computing skills. Success is more likely to depend on the quality of instructions and exercises offered to the student, combined with motivation and time available for practice.

The new generation of professional wordprocessing programs offers an enormous range of features, increasingly common to all, although functionality will vary. Programs are likely to offer optional toolbars and button sizes, drawing facilities, the ability to import and display graphics, table editors, multiple columns, mail merge, etc. This is all rather mind boggling for the novice; nevertheless, with a customised display, students are likely to get to grips with the basic functions quite quickly. Access to clear, large fonts, and simple character and paragraph formatting enables students to produce attractive documents more easily than ever before.

It is essential to check that your computer is capable of running a large program you will need a large hard disk, a fast processor and at least 4Mb RAM for most of the latest software.

The main professional wordprocessors are listed at the end of this section, but not reviewed.

Wordprocessing programs

Allwrite 2

IBM
Nimbus
Price £48
Additional language fonts £15 each

Allwrite is an educational multi-lingual wordprocessor. It is available for Arabic, Bengali, Farsi, Gaelic, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Ijaw, Nasq (for Urdu), Nordic, Panjabi, Tamil, Turkish, Vietnamese, Welsh and European languages. The European disk includes Croatian, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Serbian and Spanish. The Allwrite wordprocessor is supplied with five English fonts and a handbook; additional language fonts can then be purchased to load into the program. Screen instructions for some of the fonts can be in English or the chosen language. Up to four fonts can be used within a text, in up to four different sizes. The program can be operated from the keyboard, from a concept keyboard, or using a mouse and the on-screen keyboard which displays the characters of the target language. The on-screen keyboard display can be turned off if required. Simple menus are accessed via screen icons or function keys. The manual is clearly presented with screen illustrations, icons and minimal text. Allwrite is easy to use and is appropriate for beginner readers and writers, the partially sighted, and second language students. It is also useful for preparation of publicity and instructional material in community languages.

Published by ILECC.
Available from LETSS

Big Mac

IBM
Nimbus
Price £55

Big Mac was designed for physically handicapped children and can be used via keyboard, mouse, trackerball or switch. Text is displayed in a large, clear typeface. Whole words can be selected from word lists displayed on the lower part of the screen. Short word lists can be created and edited; long word lists can be extended, and words added or deleted. Additional facilities, including a cloze procedure format and a variety of font sizes, are available. Text can be output via a speech synthesizer.

Published by Cenmach

Co:Writer

Apple Mac
Price £209

This is an intelligent predictive wordprocessing program for the Macintosh which works with any wordprocessor or application that accepts standard text. It operates in a window which can be moved anywhere on the screen. When a letter is typed in Co:Writer, it gives a list of logical word choices that fit the sentence. The prediction is based on subject-verb agreement, word relationships, proper names, recency, frequency and user preference. For example, if the writer types *you* on the screen, *is* will not appear on the prediction list. Students with poor keyboarding skills and people with dyslexia could find a predictive wordprocessor helpful.

Published by Don Johnston Special Needs

Full Phase

Archimedes

This program includes all the features of Phases#3 and in addition includes a cloze procedure, find and replace, a wordbank for creating word lists, an overlay keyboard facility and a speech option which allows both text and commands (e.g. change letter size, fonts, etc.) to be spoken.

Published by Northwest SEMERC

MINDREADER

IBM
Price £59

Mindreader can be used as an ordinary wordprocessor, but it has special dictionary facilities. The dictionary can be used in two ways: as you type, unknown words will be marked so that they can be corrected or added to the dictionary (the disadvantage is that mistakes can be added too); the facility can also be used to predict your next word or phrase. As a letter is typed a list of choices is presented which can be selected with a single key press. Frequently-used words are given a higher priority in the dictionary. This facility can reduce the number of keystrokes needed to produce a piece of writing. The program offers extensive features, including spellchecker, but they are complicated to use despite Help facilities.

Available from Shareware

PAL

IBM
Price £49.99

PAL – Predictive Adaptive Lexicon – is designed to work with a wordprocessor to reduce the number of keystrokes for students with a physical disability, and for those with poor keyboard skills. It can also be used to support literacy skills. Typing the first letter of a word brings up a list of five words beginning with that letter. If one of the words is the one you want, it can be selected with a single keystroke. If none of the words is the right one, typing the second letter will bring up a new list to choose from, and so on. As you type, words which are not in the lists will be automatically added to the dictionary so that the vocabulary of the lists become personalised; the unfortunate disadvantage of this is that mis-spelt words will also be added thus reinforcing spelling mistakes. PAL should work with any text-based wordprocessor on a PC, although the publishers recommend using it first with Palstar (see below), which is included with PAL.

Published by Lander Software

PALSTAR

IBM
Price £24.99

Palstar is a very basic wordprocessing program offering limited formatting facilities. The typeface on screen is clear, and of a reasonable size (40 column display). There is a simple menu across the top of the screen, and selections are made by typing the first letter of a word. Palstar is cheap and may be useful as a first wordprocessor for beginner readers and writers.

Published by Lander Software

PENDOWN

Archimedes
Price £54

PenDown is an educational wordprocessor designed for use in schools but suitable for a wide range of adult students. The program is comprehensive yet easy to use. A control bar of icons at the top of the screen provides access to the main features through pull-down menus. Layout facilities include a choice of fonts and sizes, alignment of text, colour and variable thickness underlining. The spell checker can check from a single word to the whole document. Additional applications are available to the teacher including a cloze facility to prepare an ordinary text file as a cloze exercise. PenDown is supplied with a guide disk featuring a dragon which takes you through the functions of the program and encourages experimentation on prepared texts; with the exception of the dragon, the guide is not childish. The pupil's handbook is not appropriate; the teacher's manual includes curriculum advice and examples. A version of PenDown which incorporates speech is also available (see Talking PenDown).

Published by Longman Logotron

PENDOWN PLUS

Archimedes
Price £79

PenDown Plus is a development from the PenDown educational wordprocessor, and is consistent with it, but it provides additional facilities via a more sophisticated user interface. Enhanced features include automatic page numbering, headers and footers, chapter formatting through master pages, mail merging, saving or printing of selected pages and enhanced spell checking and dictionary to support foreign language work. PenDown Plus is supplied with two utilities: *Address List Manager* to facilitate mailmerging and printing of labels, and *Table Editor* to enable the creation of tables which can be inserted into wordprocessed documents. Unlike PenDown, the accompanying documentation makes no reference to children. This product is aimed at more experienced users who require full wordprocessing facilities.

Published by Longman Logotron

PHASES #3

Archimedes
Price £24

Phases is a very simple educational wordprocessor, which can incorporate graphics and also serve as a basic introduction to Desktop Publishing. When the program is loaded, a blank screen appears. There are no on-screen icons or messages. Basic wordprocessing is possible without using a menu; the function keys can be used to enlarge text through six sizes, to join lines, and save and clear the screen for new work. The save facility is particularly useful as it bypasses the usual Archimedes save procedure. Six fonts are available; the default font, Jotter, is clear, quite large and easy to read. The tool box offers a range of options including columns, colours and alignment. Graphics from a paint or draw program, or from the Phases clip-art disk which is available separately, can be added to the page and text automatically flows around the graphic. Once you are familiar with Phases, you could use the Designer option, which allows you to fix conditions on a page. You may wish to limit the options, for example, by having only one size and font available. For speech option and additional features, see Full Phase.

Published by Northwest SEMERC

TALKING PENDOWN

Archimedes
Price £64

Talking PenDown is a version of the PenDown educational wordprocessor (see PenDown) which incorporates speech. Talking PenDown can pronounce each letter, each word or each sentence as it is typed; it can also read back a block of marked text, or the whole document. When using the spell checker, alternatives to mis-spelt words can be heard thus helping the user to make the correct choice. The speech is synthesised which has its limitations (although there are improvements in pronunciation in the latest version), but no additional hardware is required – Talking PenDown will run on any RISC-OS computer. Talking PenDown can be purchased as an upgrade to PenDown.

Published by Longman Logotron

TOUCH EXPLORER PLUS WITH PROMPT/WRITER

Archimedes
IBM
Nimbus
Price £32

Touch Explorer Plus is a framework program for the concept keyboard and aims to support activities across the curriculum. Information on screen is clearly presented and appropriate for adults. Words, phrases and sentences can be displayed on screen, spoken out and printed. Overlays can be loaded singly or in groups, which allows the user to work through linked overlay levels. The accompanying documentation is detailed and shows how to create and edit overlays. It also gives sample overlays and ideas for classroom use, which may serve as a model for creating overlays for use with adults. Prompt and Writer are

Published by Resource

two wordprocessors, which can be used for free writing or with concept keyboard overlays. 128 messages up to 31 characters can be stored for each overlay. There are six overlay designs to choose from or the design can be customised to suit individual needs. Prompt has only basic wordprocessing facilities including delete, insert, wordwrap and overwrite. Writer can store longer text and offers more features including search and replace, and moving and copying text. A speech synthesizer can be attached to Prompt which can then 'say' each word.

WHOW

Nimbus
Price £20

This is a basic educational wordprocessor with clear large print on screen. It has a split screen – the top half is the writing area and the bottom half (called a 'page') displays a list of words to be used in a writing task. These could be all the words necessary to re-create a text, or key words which may or may not be included. When the user clicks on a word, it appears in the writing area. This means that text can be produced by using reading skills alone. If no mouse is available the word must be copy typed. The pages at the bottom of the screen could include progressively fewer words so that the writing requires more input from the student. It can also be used as a wordprocessor without a word list. Simple editing tasks are possible, but it operates word by word therefore a single letter cannot be deleted. Pages are quick and easy to create and could provide a range of writing tasks linking with existing literacy and ESOL materials.

Published by Newman Software

WRITE ON!

IBM
Nimbus
Price £39

Write On! is an educational wordprocessor which can be used at two levels: with a simple screen for beginners, and a flexible screen for more advanced users. The simple screen shows a writing area with scroll bars to the right, and colour palette and minipage below. Text can be inserted and deleted and the large, clear default font can be changed. To make changes, text is selected using the mouse, and a function keystrip shows a choice of fonts, sizes and styles. On-screen colours are changed by selecting text and clicking on the palette. Further options include: print, keep, fetch, new work, help and a change to the optional screen. At the bottom of this screen is a menu including cut and paste, search and replace, and graphics. A ruler appears at the top of the screen with buttons for line spacing and paragraph formatting. The user guide, which is easy to read, describes the program as 'the wordprocessor that grows with your pupils' but there is nothing childish about the appearance on screen.

Published by Software Production Associates (SPA)

WRITE:OUTLOUD

Apple Mac
Price £78

This is a wordprocessing program for the Apple Macintosh that talks. It will say what is typed letter-by-letter, word-by-word, sentence-by-sentence, or selected words or phrases only. The file can be saved and listened to as often as as needed, enabling students to recognise individual words and to be more aware of spelling mistakes such as a word correctly spelled but wrong in the context (e.g. stared for starred), letter reversals and word omissions and repetitions. The program gives a choice of word size and colour, which can be changed to emphasize particular points in the text. Ribbon buttons and keystrokes make it easy to move the cursor through the text corresponding to way the text has been chosen to be spoken. Students with dyslexia could find this program useful.

Published by Don Johnston Special Needs

Writing with Symbols

See page 24

Professional Wordprocessing programs

Most of these programs are available from local dealers, or mail order from companies who advertise in computer magazines. Prices are not quoted as they vary from dealer to dealer, and, with special offers and the launch of new versions, prices can change quickly. Educational prices are available on request on most products.

Microsoft, Lotus and Borland all produce 'office' suites of software which bundle together a wordprocessor, database, spreadsheet, and various other programs in a boxed set. This is a much cheaper way to acquire professional software, even more so if you upgrade from an older version of one of the programs.

Ami Pro

IBM
Published by Lotus

Easiwriter

Published and available from Icon Technology.

MacWrite Pro

IBM
Published by Lotus

Nisus

IBM
Published by Lotus

Microsoft Word

Published and available from Icon Technology

WordPerfect

Published and available from Icon Technology

Wordstar

Published and available from Icon Technology

CIA Open Learning Packs

Price £69.95

Ami Pro Stage I
MS Word Stage 1
MS Word for Windows Stages 1 & 2
WordPerfect Stages 1 & 2
WordPerfect for Windows Stages 1 & 2

Each of these packs provides training materials for a professional wordprocessing program and aims to teach the complete beginner the skills necessary to become a competent user of the application. The packs come with a disc of tasks to cover the various topics and an A4 spiral-bound book with clear and detailed instructions. Stage one takes the learner through to the presentation of documents whilst stage two looks at more advanced features such as tables, merges and macros. The packs are designed to develop IT skills, not basic skills.

Published by CIA Training Ltd

Grammatik 5

Apple Mac
IBM
Price £99

Grammatik is a grammar checker for wordprocessor files. It can check a document in a variety of ways, offering suggestions, advice and help on grammar and style; it also contains a spellchecker. Writing styles to choose from are: general, business, technical, fiction, informal or customised to your own specifications by selecting certain rules and rule dictionaries. The top half of the screen highlights an error in context and the bottom half shows the rule class, the language which needs attention, and advice and suggestions. There are 43 rule classes including verb agreement, punctuation, overstated or pretentious language, redundancy and long or short sentences. Some of the advice is easy to understand, for example using an informal style, the program found *assists* and the suggestion was *replace with helps*. However, on finding a split infinitive the advice was *Try changing the position of the intervening modifiers*. The on-screen help provides detail of grammar points and is not easy reading. Grammatik was not designed to 'teach' grammar; its aim is to highlight problems and offer advice, which the user then chooses to follow or ignore. To make effective use of the program, a good understanding of English usage is required. A Windows version is also available.

Published by Reference Software.
Available from dealers

IT and Basic Skills – a training pack for tutors

Price £20

This pack contains two separate training courses: *Using a wordprocessor to develop literacy skills*, and *Using a spreadsheet to develop numeracy skills*. The materials comprise wordprocessing and spreadsheet files supplied on floppy disk, instruction booklets for the computer program *Microsoft Works* (DOS and Windows) which is not supplied, and two course booklets. Each course is divided into four sections, with comprehensive section notes on the aims and objectives, skills covered, procedure, feedback and evaluation, followed by hands-on computer tasks using learning materials designed for tutors providing a model for work with students.

The wordprocessing course introduces wordprocessing skills through a range of language tasks, and addresses materials development, group work and the integration of wordprocessing activities. Literacy activities include spelling, punctuation, grammar, letter writing and creative writing. Wordprocessing skills include editing, formatting, moving text and merging files. The numeracy course introduces spreadsheet skills through a range of numeracy tasks. Numberpower topics covered include selecting credit arrangements, reading information from charts and planning the use of money. The materials are designed for self-access by individual teachers, but the pack can also be used to deliver staff training sessions.

Published by ALBSU

IT FOR ADULTS WITH DYSLEXIA

Price £5

Information and suggestions on what IT can offer adults with dyslexia are discussed in this useful booklet. There are chapters on predictive wordprocessors, spell checkers and grammar checkers as well as others on speech, planning tools, CD-ROMs and multimedia programs. Each chapter describes the programs, the benefits for the user and provides names and suppliers. A glossary of technical words is also included. This is a practical guide and could be equally relevant in general basic skills work.

Published by NCET

WORD FOR WINDOWS – SELF INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDES

Price £7

These are guides for Word for Windows versions 1 and 2. They cover topics such as entering, editing and formatting text and documents, using a spellchecker and handling files. The creation and formating of tables is covered, as are the techniques required for design features such as sections, headers and footers, styles and templates. In version 2 the guide uses Microsoft Graph to create a datasheet and column chart and place the chart in the document.

Published by ITEM. Available from Milnes and Mason

WORDPROCESSING AND LANGUAGE SKILLS

Price £3

This is a practical handbook for basic skills tutors which provides advice and guidance in using a wordprocessor to develop literacy skills. 30 different tasks are described, and for each one information is provided about the word-processing skill, the language skill, pre-computer work, follow-up exercises and what the teachers will need to prepare. It is a comprehensive and detailed guide.

Published by ALBSU

WORDPROCESSING FOR LITERACY SKILLS

IBM
Nimbus
Price £15

Wordprocessing for Literacy Skills is a self-access pack which enables students to practise and develop literacy skills through wordprocessing. The pack contains information sheets providing a beginners guide to Microsoft Word (DOS version 5.0 or earlier); exercise sheets of practice materials which focus on language tasks and are also supplied on disk; an index of exercises according to computer skills, and an index of exercises according to language skill. This pack provides a model for the creation of materials which exploit content-free software to practise and develop basic skills.

IBM/Nimbus version published by ILECC for ALBSU. Available from LETSS

Using a database

DATABASE PROGRAMS

A database program allows you to store, update and retrieve information.

Information is stored in *files*: a file is information about one subject.

Each file contains a number of *records*. A record is equivalent to a card in a card index filing system. The format of each record in a database is the same, and it will contain information on one person or thing.

Each record consists of a number of categories, called *fields*. Each field contains a separate item of information.

Computer databases offer a number of advantages over paper-based ones:

- the information (records) can be accessed in different ways; in a paperbased filing system it is easy to find information only in the way in which it is ordered, for example, information about people is likely to be ordered alphabetically on surnames, which doesn't help you to find all the people who live in a particular place
- information can be accessed very quickly
- information can be updated easily
- a lot of information can be stored in a very small space, whereas large amounts of paper-based information occupy a lot of space
- some database programs offer the possibility of displaying information in the form of graphs and charts.

USING A DATABASE TO DEVELOP BASIC SKILLS

A database is only as useful or interesting as the information it contains.

In order to access information stored in a database students will need to learn how to use the program. If students are working independently they will need:

- instructions on how to operate the program
- an interesting database file which they can access
- exercises to enable them to understand and learn how to use the program, for example, exercises to practise searching and sorting the information.

When students have become familiar with the program, further exercises which exploit the content of the database, or other databases, can be used to develop literacy and numeracy skills.

CREATING A DATABASE

The creation of a database is an activity which uses a variety of skills: discussion, decision-making, selecting information and categorising, use of speaking, writing, telephone and study skills in finding out information.

Creating a database is an ideal group activity since it also involves work away from the computer; this is of particular relevance where there is perhaps only one computer available, or where some students do not wish to use the computer.

When deciding on a subject for a database thought should be given to how the information might be used once it has been stored. It is essential to think of possible searches and sorts you might make. When a decision has been made, and the information gathered, it is a good idea to enter just a few records into the database to make sure that it works, ie. that the information can be retrieved in the way that is required.

TYPES OF PROGRAM

Educational

Educational database programs are much easier to use than professional ones and much cheaper, but they offer fewer features, and cannot hold as much information. Some educational programs will offer limited chart facilities. An educational database is likely to be adequate for use in basic skills work, where the focus is on the content of the file and the principles of information storage and retrieval, rather than the sophistication of the program. Educational database programs are not appropriate for administrative purposes.

Professional

Professional database programs are generally complex and can take a long time to learn how to use (with the exception of FileMaker Pro on the Apple Mac). This defeats the purpose of using the program to develop basic skills, unless the program is first customised by someone with substantial database expertise; even then, a professional program is not an appropriate tool for students to create their own databases. A professional program is likely to be most useful for administrative purposes or specific employment training. If students do need something more powerful than an educational program, they might be well advised to use the database program included in an integrated package such as Microsoft Works or ClarisWorks.

The main professional database programs are listed at the end of this section, but not reviewed. Integrated packages are reviewed in a separate section.

Database programs

CIA Database

Archimedes under PC emulator
IBM
Nimbus under PC emulator
Price £39

CIA Database is an educational program providing training material in using a database in a business environment. Although the program is command driven it is easy to use as the commands are logical. The database is simple, and includes the usual functions of simple and multiple search and sort; it will also calculate an average in a numeric field. Information from the database can be printed out. There are no graph facilities. The database is supplied with a *Houses* file which contains information on houses for sale. The file is accompanied by a reference sheet of fieldnames, a database command sheet, student worksheets and answer sheets. The student is placed in the position of working in an estate agent's office, retrieving information for clients, updating the file, etc. There is a also a simple user guide. The support materials make this a very useful program; additional datafiles with worksheets are available in a separate datapack (see page 50). The program can be used to create files.

Published by CIA Training Ltd.

Clipboard

Archimedes
IBM
Nimbus
Price £50

Clipboard is an educational database program. It is mouse-driven: selections are made from large, clear, coloured icons at the bottom of the screen. Records can be displayed in two different sizes of on-screen print. Data entry is limited to 12 fields with a maximum of 15 characters per field. In addition to alphanumeric and numeric fields there is a restricted field where a choice of keywords or phrases can be entered. This helps to reduce the number of possible mistakes in data entry through spellings, typing errors or inconsistency. There is a notepad facility which allows notes to be attached to a record. Notepad files are saved in text format so that they can be loaded into a wordprocessor. There is also a snapshot facility which enables pictures to be attached to a record. Clipboard offers a range of chart and graph options including pie charts, bar charts, histograms and scattergraphs. There is a teacher's page, 'hidden' from view and not linked to an icon, which enables various options, such as the speed of the mouse, to be changed. Instructions for operating the program are contained in a very clear and concise handbook. Clipboard is supplied with two sample datafiles and an additional data disk which contains numerous files on the themes of Living World, Celebrations and Changes. These themes are explored in accompanying teacher's handbooks with suggestions for classroom activities linked with key stages in the National Curriculum. The handbooks are an excellent school resource but of limited use in adult education. However, the program itself is recommended as an introduction to databases and for the development of basic skills. It is very easy to use both for the interrogation of existing data and the creation of new files.

Published by Blackcat Software

Grass

Archimedes
Nimbus
Price £28

Grass is a menu-driven, educational database program. In addition to simple and multiple search, and sort facilities, the program also offers limited graph facilities: a pie chart or count graph of information in an alphanumeric field; a histogram, cumulative graph, or scattergraph of data in a numeric field. Average (mean) and median can be calculated for numeric data. Although the graphs are not sophisticated, they are useful for developing skills in the interpretation of graphical data. Information from the database and charts and graphs can be

Published by Newman Software

printed out. Grass is supplied with sample data files but these have been created for use in the primary classroom. Grass is easy to use, both for the interrogation of existing files, and for the creation of new ones.

Information Workshop

IBM
Price £99

Information Workshop is an educational data handling package which runs under Windows on IBM PC compatibles. The program can be used at one of three levels. The green level is the simplest and enables the user to explore datafiles, but not create them. It has a large on-screen font, short menus, simple dialogue boxes and fewer options. The blue level is an intermediate level; it has fewer graph types than the highest level, and a medium font. The red level is the full program with maximum choice of graphs, statistics, font size, etc. The program can be loaded at one of the three levels, and used at that level, or loaded from a program icon which allows the user to switch between levels. Information Workshop is very easy to use with a clear screen display. There is a row of large buttons at the top of the screen which give access to the main functions of the program: search, sort, print, graphs, etc. There is an excellent help facility which describes the functions of the buttons, and the operation of the program. There is a good choice of charts which are easy to select using icons: bar charts, pie charts, histograms, scattergraphs and line graphs.

Information Workshop is targeted at schools and is supplied with two handbooks, one for pupils and one for teachers. There is a sample data file, and activities in the handbooks to create files but these are not appropriate for adult students. However, the handbooks provide clear instructions on the operation of the program. GRASS files (Nimbus version) can be loaded directly into Information Workshop, so existing databases, such as World Count, can be used. Published by Research Machines

Published by Research Machines

Key – A Data Handling Package

Archimedes
Nimbus
Price £17.63

Key is a menu-driven, educational database program which can be used to interrogate and create data files. The search facility offers a choice of simple or complex search which can be helpful to the new user; the complex search allows selection through menus, including the facility to check what criteria have been chosen, or by typing in commands. The hierarchical structure of the menus is rather confusing, and it is necessary to go through several menus for certain commonly-used selections; for example to re-select all records to start a new search you have to go through the display menus. One of the strengths of Key is the range and quality of the graphical displays offered, including pie charts, bar charts, Venn diagrams and scattergraphs. There is an option to display information on a map, and the facility to create a map (although this is not easy). Information from the database, and the charts and graphs, can be printed out. A range of data files is available for Key.

Published by ETC

Key Plus

Archimedes
IBM
Price £70.50

There are versions of Key Plus designed for both Archimedes and IBM computers . They have been developed from the original Key database program. The Archimedes version can run in two different ways: in Key style, where it looks like the original Key program, with some minor improvements (for users familiar with the BBC version), or under RISC OS, where it uses the standard RISC OS windows style of menus and selections. The IBM version runs under Windows 3. Key Plus takes advantage of the more powerful machines to offer a comprehensive and flexible program. However, the number of choices offered to the user is correspondingly greater making it a more complicated program to learn how to use. Archimedes users will need to be experienced in RISC OS applications; IBM users will need to be familiar with Windows.

Published by ETC

PinPoint 2/PinPoint for Windows

Archimedes
PinPoint 2 Price £99
Junior PinPoint Price £29

IBM
PinPoint for Windows
Price £129
Junior PinPoint for
Windows Price £39

PinPoint is a database program designed to enable the user to conduct all aspects of a survey, including questionnaire design, data collection and survey analysis and presentation. There is enormous flexibility in the design of a form; questions can be set out, moved around, added to or amended; design can be enhanced with features such as lines, boxes headings, text, arrows and graphics. The program allows a number of different types of response to questions: text, numeric, yes/no, date, multiple choice and ordered choice. The completed form can be printed out and used for data collection. When information has been entered into the database, in addition to search and sort facilities, PinPoint can compile results from different questions to produce comparisons and trends. Information gathered in the survey can be presented in charts and graphs, including pie-charts, horizontal, vertical and stacked bar charts, line graphs and scattergraphs. Combination graphs can illustrate responses to a question from different groups. A wide range of statistical analysis can also be undertaken. This is a powerful and sophisticated program which will take time to get to grips with; however it is the ideal tool for conducting surveys. A simple version, Junior PinPoint, is designed to introduce young children to data handling techniques; the documentation and example datafiles are not appropriate for adults but the program itself is not childish.

Published by Longman Logotron

Revolver

Nimbus
Price £36

Revolver is a local viewdata program. Pages of information can be created and linked together (routed) through using a system of menus. Pages can also be built into a carousel. The editor uses established viewdata standards including hide/reveal features, flashing text and graphics. A help facility is provided at all stages. Revolver has a utility for converting pages downloaded from external services such as Prestel. The program is supplied with an example 200-page travel database.

Published by ITEM

Professional database programs

These programs are all available from local dealers, or mail order from companies who advertise in computer magazines. Prices are not quoted as they vary from dealer to dealer, and, with special offers and the launch of new versions, prices can change quickly. Educational prices are available on request on most products.

Microsoft, Lotus and Borland all produce 'office' suites of software which bundle together a wordprocessor, database, spreadsheet, and various other programs in a boxed set. This is a much cheaper way to acquire professional software, even more so if you upgrade from an older version of one of the programs.

Access

IBM

Published by Microsoft

Approach

IBM

Published by Lotus

DataEase Express

IBM

Published by Dataease International

dBASE

IBM

Published by Borland

Filemaker Pro

Apple Mac

Published by Claris

FoxPro

IBM Apple Mac

Published by Microsoft

Paradox

IBM

Published by Borland

Superbase

IBM

Software Publishing Corporation

CIA Database Datapack

Archimedes under PC emulator
IBM
Nimbus under PC emulator
Price £19.95

This pack contains a disk of datafiles for use with the CIA database program (see page 46). Support materials for each file include a reference sheet of fieldnames, and student worksheets and answer sheets. The files are: *Fabrics*: a stock database for a small clothing company; *Company*: information about employees in a small company; *Employee*: personal details of employees; *Cars*: a database of used cars for sale; *Foods*: information on foods to plan a healthy diet; *Country*: statistical information on major countries in the world, including major language, imports, exports and industry.

Published by CIA Training Ltd.

CIA Open Learning Packs

Price £69.95

MS Access
Paradox
Paradox for Windows

Each of these packs provides training materials for a professional database program, and take the learner to a stage where he or she can create a database, enter information, make queries and output the results in various formats. They come with a disk of tasks to cover the various topics and an A4 spiral-bound book with clear and detailed instructions. The packs are designed to develop IT skills, not basic skills.

Published by CIA Training Ltd.

Healthdata

Archimedes Price £14.95
IBM Price £19.95
Nimbus Price £14.95

Healthdata is an extensive database of information on health topics, written by a doctor. The information is presented in 'pages' which can be accessed via an alphabetical index or through topics. Some of the text is quite dense demanding good reading skills. Nevertheless Healthdata is a valuable resource providing a wealth of interesting and useful information on a wide variety of health issues. The preparation of assignments is recommended for effective use.

Published by Healthdata

Health Matters

See page 13

Hulton Deutsch Collection

See page 14

Location Maker UK

Apple Mac
Price £45

This comprehensive illustrated database of mainland Britain and Scotland includes regional and county maps, digitised photos of places of interest and data cards with facts about 13,500 place names. It can be browsed using video style browsing buttons and searched by clicking on icons. Many of the cards have been left blank so that students can add text and graphics of their own thus encouraging research and increasing the depth of the database. Text on the data cards is small and students would need to have good reading skills to take full advantage of the program.

Published by The Flexible Learning Company

OUTBREAK

Outbreak is an activity pack produced for group work in FE. Students use IT to investigate the source of an infectious disease. Information about the disease and its carriers is given in messages delivered by Simtex (see page 19). Students write press releases and make further enquiries using either Grass or Quest to examine the datafiles provided. Outbreak is designed to develop communication and problem-solving skills.

Nimbus
Outbreak
Price £24

Published by ITEM

SUPERBASE – SELF INSTRUCTION GUIDE

This guide takes the learner through the basics of the program and includes: how to create files, how to design forms and present data, and how to produce reports. The guide uses extensive Superbase files based on European countries and cities, backed up by text and graphic files, including maps, which are supplied on disk. ITEM self instruction guides have been written for educational use and are intended to be supplemented with additional practice exercises. They develop IT skills, not basic skills. Teachers may find them useful for learning the basics of a program.

Price £11

Published by ITEM.
Available from LETSS

WORLD COUNT

World Count introduces a computer database and exploits the database to develop numeracy skills. The pack contains a database of world population statistics, which includes population, life expectancy, birth rate and infant mortality rate, for use with the Grass database program, which is also supplied. The database is supported by two books written for adult students: *How to use Grass*, which explains database terminology and contains step-by-step instructions on how to use the program, and *World Count Worksheets*, a set of exercises which exploit the information contained in the database. There is an emphasis on how to interpret information from numbers, and topics include place value and large numbers, averages, charts and graphs, percentages. Points for discussion on population issues are suggested, making World Count appropriate for group work.

Archimedes
Price £30
Nimbus
Price £25

Published by ILECC for ALBSU.
Available from LETSS

Using a spreadsheet

SPREADSHEET PROGRAMS

A spreadsheet is designed to store numbers and to enable calculations to be performed on those numbers through the use of mathematical formulae. Words can also be entered into a spreadsheet to label the figures.

All spreadsheet programs have the same format: a grid of slots or cells arranged in rows and columns. Each slot or cell has its own unique reference, but the system of referencing varies from program to program.

USING A SPREADSHEET TO DEVELOP NUMERACY SKILLS

A spreadsheet is a powerful tool for storing and manipulating numbers, and can be used for investigations, but in order to use a spreadsheet successfully it is necessary to learn how to use the program. The process of learning to use a spreadsheet offers scope for the simultaneous development of numeracy skills, in the same way that learning to use a wordprocessor can be combined with practising literacy skills.

Students will need:

- instructions on how to operate the program
- prepared exercises which enable students to learn the functions of the program
- tasks, including problem-solving, which require students to devise their own spreadsheets.

Initial exercises to introduce the skills of entering numbers and formulae can be a useful way of practising basic number skills through such topics as magic squares, multiplication and division by powers of ten, investigating relationships between pairs of numbers, sequences, etc.

Spreadsheets are ideal tools for a range of accounting exercises such as personal or household budgets, planning events (a day trip, a local disco, a fund-raising fair, etc), comparing methods of hire purchase repayments, comparing prices in local supermarkets, etc.

It is worth having a spreadsheet program which offers chart and graph facilities. Although not all students will not want to learn how to create a chart or graph, as this requires more in the way of spreadsheet skills, you will be able to create charts for students to interpret, and produce paper-based materials.

TYPES OF PROGRAM

Educational

There are very few educational spreadsheet programs which are appropriate for adults – most have been developed for primary education and are very limited.

Professional

The older professional spreadsheet programs were not very user-friendly, and undoubtedly all the mouse-driven programs, which provide access via buttons and menus to common functions, are much easier to use.

The new generation of professional programs offers an enormous range of features, increasingly common to all, although functionality will vary. Programs are likely to offer numerous mathematical, statistical and financial functions, extensive formatting and display facilities, and a wide choice of two and three dimensional colour charts and graphs. This is all rather mind-boggling for the novice; nevertheless, students are likely to get to grips with the basic functions quite quickly, and if you can easily customise the menu options to limit the choices available, as with Microsoft Excel 5, for example, the program will appear less daunting.

It is essential to check that your computer is capable of running a large program you will need a large hard disk, a fast processor and at least 4Mb RAM for most of the latest software.

The main professional spreadsheet programs are listed at the end of this section, but not reviewed.

Spreadsheet programs

Advantage

Archimedes
Price £49

Advantage is an educational spreadsheet program. It is designed to be mouse-driven, using a simple button bar at the top of the screen which gives access to basic functions, formatting features and chart facilities. Charts include pie, area, column, line and scatter. Intelligent data entry means the program can recognise dates, percentages, text, numbers and formulas. The program is designed with an emphasis on simplicity and ease of use, but it models more sophisticated programs and offers access to all the spreadsheet facilities required to support numeracy and basic maths. Advantage will also load and save Eureka-compatible files thus supporting progression to a professional spreadsheet package. Although designed for use in schools, the program itself is not childish, and is an appropriate program for introducing spreadsheets.

Published by Longman Logotron

The Cambridge Spreadsheet

Archimedes
IBM
Nimbus
Price £25

This is a very simple educational program designed to introduce the concept of spreadsheets. The screen display is very clear with gridlines defining individual cells; the selected cell is highlighted. The size of a spreadsheet is limited to what fits on to the screen, which overcomes the difficulties of scrolling. Labels, numbers and formulae can be entered; options are chosen from a command menu, or via function keys. Limited graph facilities are available; numeric data in an individual row or column can be displayed in the form of a bar chart, line graph, pie chart or frequency graph. Cell references and contents displayed by the graph are shown on screen. The print facility enables spreadsheets to be printed out; graphs can only be printed from the Nimbus version. This is a limited program, but very easy to use; it is suitable as an introduction to spreadsheets for basic numeracy work.

Published by Cambridgeshire Software House

Grasshopper

Archimedes
Nimbus
Price £30

Grasshopper is an educational program designed to introduce spreadsheets in Archimedes schools. A simple menu is used for file-handling; print options and limits of functions are set from a teacher's page. The spreadsheet itself is displayed in 40-column text; cells are not separated by gridlines. Data can be entered into the spreadsheet as a label, number or function and the option chosen is displayed with the cell contents at the top of the screen. Column widths extend automatically up to 10 characters to accommodate cell contents. The program is easy to operate, but offers limited features.

Published by Newman Software

PROFESSIONAL SPREADSHEET PROGRAMS

Most of these these programs are available from local dealers, or mail order from companies who advertise in computer magazines. Prices are not quoted as they vary from dealer to dealer, and, with special offers and the launch of new versions, prices can change quickly. Educational prices are available on request on most products.

Microsoft, Lotus and Borland all produce 'office' suites of sofware which bundle together a wordprocessor, database, spreadsheet, and various other programs in a boxed set. This is a much cheaper way to acquire professional software, even more so if you upgrade from an older version of one of the programs.

CA-SUPERCALC

IBM
Published by Computer Associates

EUREKA

Archimedes
Published and available from Longman Logotron

EXCEL

IBM
Apple Mac
Published by Microsoft

LOTUS 1 2 3

IBM
Apple Mac
Published by Lotus

QUATTRO PRO

Published by Borland

CIA Open Learning Packs

Lotus 1-2-3 Stage 1
Lotus 1-2-3 for Windows Stage 1
MS Excel Stages 1 & 2
Quattro Pro for Windows Stage 1

Price £69.95

Each of these packs provides training materials for a professional spreadsheet program to enable the learner to create and edit spreadsheets, use functions and create and print graphs. Stage two introduces more advanced features such as statistical and financial functions, macros, databases and tables. They come with a disk of tasks to cover the various topics and an A4 spiral-bound book with clear and detailed instructions. The packs are designed to develop IT skills, not basic skills.

Published by CIA Training Ltd.

CIA Spreadsheets

Archimedes under PC emulator
IBM
Nimbus under PC emulator
Price £49

This spreadsheet program has been written to provide training in the use of spreadsheets in a business environment. The program cannot be used to set up a new spreadsheet. It is supplied with six files supported by student worksheets and answer sheets. The files are: *Personal finance:* an exercise to plan personal finances over a four-week period; *House finance:* household finances over a twelve-month period; *Retailing:* a retail company's finances over a twelve-month period; *Manufacturing:* a manufacturing company's finances over a twelve-month period; *Holiday:* a currency conversion spreadsheet which includes francs, pesetas, marks and dollars; *Payroll:* the weekly wages bill for a company. The layout of the spreadsheets and the formulae cannot be changed, but numeric data and labels can be. Cells are not separated by gridlines, but lines have been added to the files to improve presentation. Although it does not use standard spreadsheet commands, the program is easy to operate. A help facility is always available, and instruction sheets are provided. The files and support materials make this a useful program.

Published by CIA Training Ltd.

IT and Basic Skills – A training pack for tutors

See page 41

Microsoft Excel – Self instruction guide

Price £7

This guide provides an introduction to the main features of Microsoft Excel (Versions 2 and 3) through two separate tasks. A *spreadsheet with charts* involves setting up a spreadsheet based on housing statistics. The data is then used to create column charts, line and area charts, and pie charts. A *financial spreadsheet* uses a business spreadsheet to demonstrate financial modelling. ITEM self instruction guides have been written for educational use and are intended to be supplemented with additional practice exercises. They develop IT skills not basic skills. Tutors may find them useful for learning the basics of a program. Guides for Excel 4 and 5 will be available soon.

Published by ITEM. Available from Milnes and Mason

Simply Spreadsheets

Price £6

Simply Spreadsheets is a book of ideas about how teachers can support both cross-curricular and mathematical activities through the use of a spreadsheet. Targeted at schools, activities are designed for children aged from 8 to 14 years and an appendix details how spreadsheets fit into the National Curriculum. However, a sufficient number of the activities are appropriate for adults to make this a useful resource for adult numeracy teachers. In particular, chapters on

Published by KW Publications

Calculating Projects (A newspaper survey, the Milk Round and The Taxi Journey), *Mathematical Modelling* (A Housing Valuation Model, and challenges to develop a model to predict election results, to develop a compound interest model, or to predict changes in world population) and *Investigating number patterns and sequences* all provide ideas and material which could be adapted for use with adults.

Simply Spreadsheets – support files

Disk files of examples used in Simply Spreadsheets are available on disk for Excel or Grasshopper spreadsheet programs.

IBM Excel files £6
Nimbus Excel files £6
Grasshopper files £6

Published by KW Publications

Spreadsheets for Mathematics and Information Technology

Price £27.50

This resource book of materials can be used with any spreadsheet program. Twenty-seven activity worksheets present different tasks which require the student to set up a and carry out further investigations. Each activity is supported by a spreadsheet specification which provides detailed help on how to create the spreadsheet. Both the activity sheet and the specification are clearly presented on A4 pages designed to be photocopied. Each activity is also supported by teacher's notes on spreadsheet techniques, answers, and suggestions for further development. Activities are divided into Applications and Calculation, Number and Pattern, and Formulas and Equations, and topics include APR, inflation, nutritional analysis, volumes, odd, even, square and prime numbers. They are intended to support National Curriculum Key Stage 4 but are suitable for adult students. The book has a useful introduction on spreadsheets, but teachers will need some familiarity with their own program to support students in these tasks.

Published by John Murray

Spreadsheets from SMILE – a resource pack

Price £19.95
Help Books £5 for two

This pack focuses on spreadsheets as a tool within the mathematics curriculum. The pack consists of twenty SMILE activity cards, and two books: Hints and Answers Book and Teachers Book. The activity cards are selected from the SMILE Mathematics network as investigations that are appropriate for exploration with the aid of a spreadsheet. The Spreadsheet Hints and Answers book contains additional information on each activity. This combines mathematical information and specific help in developing a spreadsheet appropriate to the investigation. The Teachers Book provides a brief introduction to the use of spreadsheets followed by more detailed information about each activity.

An excellent Spreadsheet Help Book is available separately and this is designed as a reference for students to use next to the computer. The instructions are clear and concise and cover the spreadsheet functions needed to carry out the activities. The Help Book is for use with Microsoft Excel. This pack is obviously designed for use in schools; however, those in FE and Adult Education seeking to develop the use of spreadsheets will find the pack a useful source of materials and ideas for mathematical investigations.

Published by The SMILE Mathematics Centre

Integrated packages

Integrated Packages

Integrated packages combine wordprocessing, database and spreadsheet facilities in a single program. They may offer additional facilities, such as communications, but these are not addressed in this guide.

Integrated packages offer a consistent mode of operation between applications, and enable the user to transfer data easily between applications; for example figures from a spreadsheet can be loaded into a wordprocessed report (this is possible between completely different programs but it can be a more complicated procedure).

Integrated packages can be particularly useful for work experience activities. They may also offer a cheaper means of providing the major content-free applications.

ClarisWorks

Apple Mac
IBM
Windows
Price £195

ClarisWorks comprises a wordprocessor, database, spreadsheet and charting facilities. It is comparatively easy to pass information from one application to another – for example, to put a chart or figures from the spreadsheet in a wordprocessed report, or to use names and addresses from the database when writing letters.

To pass figures from a spreadsheet to a wordprocessor in a normal integrated package, you would open the spreadsheet, copy the information, then open the wordprocessor and paste the figures into the text. You would then probably have to format the figures into columns. ClarisWorks makes the procedure much simpler. You can open the wordprocessor, and the spreadsheet independently in separate windows, but you can also open or create a miniature spreadsheet in any position inside a wordprocessor text, making a professional page-display comparatively easy. The wordprocessor can be used in the usual way to do plain typing, or you can arrange text in boxes around other objects (including graphics) on the page. ClarisWorks also provides drawing facilities and offers some of the display features of a desktop publishing program, in addition to the very flexible and easy-to-use wordprocessor, database, spreadsheet and charting facilities.

Published by CLARIS.
Available from dealers

Microsoft Works

Apple Mac
IBM
Nimbus under PC emulator
Price £69

Microsoft Works is a wordprocessor, database, spreadsheet and communications package. It operates through pull-down menus and dialogue boxes, and is generally easy to use. Works provides the major features you would expect of a wordprocessor. Some operations, for example, moving or copying a block of text, are easy and foolproof, as you are not allowed to continue until the operation is complete, so text cannot be lost. The wordprocessor comes with a spellchecker and thesaurus. Although not as simple as an educational database, Works could still be used for basic skills. Records can be viewed in a list format (with a choice of field to be displayed), or as a form which you design yourself. When creating a database, it is simple to add fields and set field lengths. In the selection of field types there is a choice of number formats including time/date, currency, percent. Unfortunately the data cannot be represented graphically unless it is first transferred to the spreadsheet. The spreadsheet is easy to use and offers the usual features. Numbers from the spreadsheet can be analysed in a choice of eight different types of chart. Charts can be labelled, and a legend added. Fonts and colours can be changed, and charts can be printed out. Information can be transferred easily between different programs in the Works package. It is a good choice if you have a computer for which there are no educational versions of applications programs, or if your budget is limited and you need a single package to meet all needs, or as an introduction to integrated applications for work preparation. The Apple version is more like the Windows version described below.

Published byMicrosoft.
Available from dealers

Microsoft Works for Windows

IBM
Price £75

The Windows version of Microsoft Works offers wordprocessing, database, spreadsheet and graphing facilities. A button bar along the top of the screen gives access to the main features of each of the programs. The wordprocessor has a spellchecker and thesaurus. Graphics can be created and placed within a document; files can also be imported, but graphics cannot be manipulated easily once they have been placed. The database allows data to be viewed in a form or a list. The list format is remarkably like an Excel spreadsheet. An icon is used to switch between views. The spreadsheet is easy to use, and columns can be resized by dragging the separating lines. Two-dimensional colour charts can be created using data from the database or spreadsheet. The choices are pie charts, line graphs, bar charts and scatter graphs. Microsoft Works for Windows is a comprehensive program and will meet the needs of both students and tutors.

Published by Microsoft.
Available from dealers

PIPEDREAM 4

Archimedes
IBM
Price £99

Pipedream is a professional integrated package offering wordprocessing, database and spreadsheet facilities. The notable difference between Pipedream and other integrated packages is that there is no division between the different applications. This makes it ideal for producing documents which combine numbers and text. It is possible to begin a document by entering text with all the editing, formatting, and other facilities which you would expect from a wordprocessor, and then enter figures and formulae with all the spreadsheet functions available, rather than creating separate files and then importing data. A Pipedream page contains rows and columns which divide the page into cells as on a conventional spreadsheet. The advantage of this in using the wordprocessor is that tables can be created very easily as it is possible to confine text to a single column or a limited number of columns anywhere on the page. However, as a wordprocessor Pipedream is unconventional and does not operate like other programs. The menus are daunting (even the short menus), partly because they display the complex control codes which can be used to perform functions via the keyboard, partly because of the number of options available. Operations can also be performed through function keys and a function keystrip is provided. Pipedream is a powerful program which offers comprehensive features, but it is more suited to a business environment where text and figures are frequently combined in a single document.

Published by Colton Software.
Available from dealers

CIA Open Learning Pack

MS Works for Windows

Price £39.95 for 1 section
£99.95 for 3 sections

This pack provides training materials for Works for Windows. Each application, database, spreadsheet and wordprocessor, is dealt with separately and should take the user 12 hours to complete. They can be bought as separate sections but if all three are bought together, then there is a section showing how to integrate the applications. The pack comes with a disk of tasks to cover the various topics and an A4 spiral bound book with clear and detailed instructions. The pack is designed to develop IT skills, not basic skills.

Published by CIA Training Ltd.

IT and Basic Skills – A Training Pack for Tutors

See page 41

MS Works for Windows – Self instruction guide

Price £7

The guide is divided into four parts: wordprocessor, spreadsheet, database and integration. It provides an introduction to the main principles of each of the applications as well as the method of moving data from one to another. ITEM self instruction guides have been written for educational use and are intended to be supplemented with additional practice exercises. They develop IT skills, not basic skills. Tutors may find them useful for learning the basics of a program.

Published by ITEM. Available from Milnes and Mason

Desktop publishing

Desktop publishing programs

A desktop publishing program enables text and graphics to be manipulated within a single document. Generally, text files will be created with a wordprocessor, and graphics files with a paint or graphics program, and then loaded into the desktop publishing program for typesetting and page-layout.

Educational desktop publishing programs are much easier to use than professional ones, but offer limited features and less flexibility.

Professional desktop publishing programs can take a long time to learn how to use efficiently, but they enable the user to produce materials of a professional quality (although a laser printer is essential for truly professional output).

Using a desktop publishing program to develop basic skills

It is debatable whether using a desktop publishing program really does support the development of basic skills. Undoubtedly, the production of materials which combine text and graphics (for example, a newsletter or magazine) can be a worthwhile activity but this can be achieved with cut and paste of work produced separately. It is a question of deciding whether the time taken to learn how to use a desktop publishing program is justified by the outcome. In some cases the opportunity to use a desktop publishing program will motivate a student to produce written work which they may otherwise be reluctant to undertake.

Some students will want to acquire desktop publishing skills with a view to employment. In this case they will need access to a professional program. However, it may be appropriate to refer the student to a specialist course if one is available locally.

Producing learning materials

Desktop publishing facilities enable teachers to produce high quality learning materials for students. A professional program will offer the best facilities, but again, the time taken to learn how to use a program should not be underestimated. Producing materials with a desktop publishing program can be a time consuming business even for the experienced user.

Aldus PageMaker

Apple Mac
IBM
Price £250

The first ever DTP program was originally available on the Apple Macintosh, but is now also widely used in Windows on IBM and compatibles. It presents an on-screen version of the paste-up table used by designers of magazines, brochures etc, and is aimed at creative users who wish to experiment with their designs and work visually. PageMaker's strengths lie in the production of documents whose pages vary in design and layout, such as newsletters and publicity materials, though it can also produce long and formal documents. For the novice, PageMaker's approach is probably more sympathetic and more easily grasped by experimentation. Its critics point out that its flexibility makes it easier to produce poorly-designed and inconsistent publications. Pagemaker 4 and 5 come with a built in wordprocessor which includes essentials such as a spellchecker, making it even more flexible in use. Note that these versions will need the use of a more powerful computer, whether in IBM or Macintosh versions. As a top DTP package it is a comparatively expensive and sophisticated program, but is relatively intuitive and usable by the novice.

Published by Aldus.
Available from dealers

Avagio

IBM
Price £25

Avagio claims to provide 'Mac style DTP on your PC'. It has drop down menus and offers the full range of features expected in a professional desktop publishing program. Pages can be viewed in a range of sizes including a minipage which can remain on screen. There are font effects including fill patterns and the ability to fade across or down a headline. Text will flow around graphics, which can be imported from other programs; the package includes a library of more than 100 graphics. The advantage of Avagio is that it can print out large text using a variety of effects without a PostScript printer.

Published by LTS

Corel Ventura Publisher

Apple Mac
IBM
Price £195

Ventura Publisher is one of the most successful professional DTP packages produced for the IBM. In contrast to Aldus PageMaker, probably its greatest rival, its strengths are in the control and restraint it imposes on the documents it produces. Like Timeworks, which is arguably a cheap cut-down copy of Ventura, it works on the frame principle, and is particularly suited to the production of longer documents with regular layouts, such as manuals and books. The page of the document is laid out in framed areas into which text or graphics can be poured. This approach suits those who seek precision and restraint, rather than the flexibility and creativity of PageMaker. Ventura has notable precision and control over typography, allowing such features as vertical justification. These typographic features are aimed at professional users and some may feel they go beyond the requirements of the general user. The assembled Ventura document still clearly separates the original wordprocessed files and graphics. Thus any changes to the text made in either wordprocessor or Ventura are automatically recorded in both the wordprocessed file and the Ventura publication. In many other DTP programs text changes mean that the different articles have to be deliberately exported back to the wordprocessed file. Ventura supports a wide range of printers, and is now available for both GEM and Windows on the IBM and compatibles, as well as for the Apple Macintosh. It is a sophisticated program which will take time to learn how to use.

Published by Venture Software Inc.
Available from dealers

DESKTOP FOLIO

Archimedes
Price £69.50

Desktop Folio is an educational program which combines wordprocessing and desktop publishing facilities. The package is designed to work at two levels. Simple Screen Folio is a wordprocessor with pictures and can be used with a concept keyboard; it also introduces the user to the mouse control, scroll bars and windows of the Desktop level. Desktop Folio is far more sophisticated. It offers integrated wordprocessing and desktop publishing facilities. There is a host of features including a choice of fonts, ready to use stationery, layout design and editing facilities, and the ability to create pictures or import from a library. The ready-to-use stationery and pictures have been designed for children. Desktop Folio is supplied with activity cards, short-cut keycards, library reference cards, and ideas for use in the curriculum, but it is aimed specifically at school users.

Published by ESM

FRONT PAGE EXTRA

Archimedes
Nimbus
£20

Front Page Extra is designed to create newspaper style documents for educational users. It uses simple layout. Headlines and headings are centred automatically at a given size. Text can be printed in two or three columns and picture frames can be drawn for later cut and paste addition (by hand) of graphics. Students can produce a well-laid out document with the minimum of computer skills. It is a basic program from which students could progress to a more sophisticated wordprocessor or desktop publishing program. The Archimedes version is mouse driven and has been enhanced to include full wordprocessing facilities.

Published by Newman Software

IMPRESSION PUBLISHER

Archimedes
Price £169

Described as a complete document processor, this program is an updated and easier-to-use version of the earlier desktop publishing program, Impression. Impression is frame-based; text and graphics are contained within frames and any editing will occur within a selected frame. Frames can be linked into a sequence to dictate the flow of text; this sequence can cross page boundaries but is restricted to the current chapter. Text can be entered directly into Impression or files can be imported. If required the spellchecker can be used to 'check as you type'. There is also a dictionary and thesaurus. Graphics support has been improved and there is greater colour control. Impression Publisher offers all the features you would expect of a professional desktop publishing program.

Published by Computer Concepts Ltd

NEWSPAPER

IBM
Nimbus
Price £75

NewSPAper is designed to produce pages as in a real newspaper; it can also be used as a simple desktop publishing program. There are four areas to work from: the *Editor* plans the layout of the page, which can incorporate graphics, headings and text. The *Reporter* uses a simple wordprocessor to write articles; the *Illustrator* prepares the pictures. Pictures can be created using a full range of draw and paint facilities or by importing graphics from the library. The library can also contain items of text. In the *Printer's Workshop*, the user previews the page, checks layout details and prints. The program can be used for collaborative group work, where students undertake the different tasks of planning, writing and layout or for an individual piece of work. There is on-screen help at all stages. The program comes with a notebook which contains understandable, detailed notes and tips on how to use the program. There is also a reference manual for more advanced users. Although not a professional desktop publishing program, NewSPAper can produce reasonable results once the basic principles of the program are understood.

Published by Software Production Associates (SPA)

OVATION

Archimedes
Price £69

Ovation can be used as an ordinary wordprocessor or as a full desktop publishing program. Text can be entered directly on to a blank page, with a wide range of wordprocessing facilities available, including a 'check as you type' spellchecker. In addition to text in the main page, text can be typed or imported into text frames which can be linked to control the flow of text.

Ovation uses a parent/child system for manipulating frames. If a frame is drawn within another frame, it becomes the child and the outer frame is the parent. If the parent is moved or copied, the child is moved and copied with it. This makes it easy to manipulate diagrams, tables, forms, etc. which may consist of numerous framed objects. The main page text will flow around text frames and pictures. Graphics can be imported and manipulated within the program. Ovation displays five small icons on the bottom of the screen which select the main tools of the program. Other functions and features are accessed through standard RISC OS menus.

Published by Beebug

PRINTMASTER GOLD

IBM
Price £59

Printmaster Plus lets you design your own posters, cards, calendars, banners (up to 6 feet long) and stationery. It comes with a range of borders and graphics to which you can add a limited amount of text in a range of fonts. It is very easy to use as you choose from a menu at each stage. You can preview your design and see different effects on the screen.

Published by LTS

QUARK XPRESS

Apple Mac
Price £695

Quark Xpress is a professional DTP program for the Macintosh. An Xpress page consists of text boxes and graphics boxes, which can be drawn freehand or accurately sized and positioned, rotated to any angle and given a coloured, shaded or transparent background. There are no facilities for creating graphics, but you can import a wide range of graphics formats from other programs into a graphics box. The box can be irregular in shape, or text can be made to flow around a graphic shape inside a rectangular box.

The feature which sets Xpress apart from other DTP software is its ability to manipulate text. You can type straight into Xpress almost as fast as in an ordinary wordprocessor, and spellcheck your typing. You can of course save text styles. But the real flexibility is in 'copy-fitting' – making a piece of text fit an available space – by changing the leading (the space between lines in a paragraph) or the kerning and tracking (the space between letters in a word or line), or specifying vertical justification (automatically spacing the lines to make a short text fill a longer box). All these can be achieved very easily, with the results immediately obvious on screen. You can group elements of a page together so that they behave as one (tying together a picture and its caption, for example) while still being free to change any of the elements independently. And when a piece of the page is absolutely right, you can lock it in position to avoid accidents. As a professional tool, Xpress is hard to beat, but it requires considerable investment of time to make the results pay off.

Published by Computers Unlimited. Available from dealers

ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS

The following desktop publishing programs have not been reviewed. They represent a selection of the newer, cheaper programs which provide many of the features of the major professional packages at a fraction of the cost. These programs all run under Windows and are available from dealers.

MICROSOFT PUBLISHER

As easy-to-use program which will create layouts, logos and icons to your specifications and import text from most major wordprocessors. There is a clip-art library and images can also be added from other sources.

IBM
Price £69
Published by Microsoft

PAGEMAKER CLASSIC

This is a version of PageMaker aimed at home and educational users. It provides a text entry and editing facility which includes spellchecker, search and replace and a dictionary. Documents can be linked together and a common index and table of contents created for the merged documents. PageMaker Classic appears to offer the features of PageMaker 4.

IBM
Price £59.95
Published by Aldus

PAGEPLUS

This package supports most wordprocessing programs as well as allowing direct text input. Both text and graphics can be rotated through any angle.

IBM
Price £59.95
Published by Serif Europe

PRESSWORKS

This is a development of Timeworks, a frame-based desktop publishing program. The program is now available for Windows in full colour. New fonts and a clip art browser have been added.

IBM
Price £79
Published by GTS Software

Aldus Pagemaker – Self instruction guide

Price £4

This guide is for Aldus Pagemaker version 3 running under Windows 2. It provides an introduction to the main principles of the program through the separate tasks of creating an advertisement for a local newspaper, and a menu for a Vietnamese restaurant. Different sections cover: starting a new publication, creating a layout grid, pagemaker graphics, entering text, using a master page, style sheets and importing texts. ITEM self instruction guides have been written for educational use and are intended to be supplemented with additional practice exercises. They develop IT skills not basic skills. Tutors may find them useful for learning the basics of a program.

Published by ITEM

CIA Open Learning Packs

Price £69.95

Aldus PageMaker 3, 4 & 5

Each of these packs provides training materials for a version of the Pagemaker desktop publishing program and takes the learner from manipulating text and graphics, and saving and printing documents through to design and production of a variety of display materials. They come with a disk of tasks to cover the various topics and an A4 spiral bound book with clear and detailed instructions. The packs are designed to develop IT skills, not basic skills.

Published by CIA Training Ltd.

Literacy

Autoskill Reading System 8
Baselines 8
Cloze Program 9
Codebreaker 9
Complete Speller 9
Complete Wordsearch 9
Context (Spelling It Out) 9
Davidson's English Express 10
Deadline 10
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New Reading Disc 16
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